1. Heideggerian – Being and Time as Question of My Active Inquiry? - The Trouble with Transcendental Imagination - The Passage’L Acte - Imagination - The Monstrous - Kant with David Lynch – Commencing with this Ticklish Subject and now Adamant on the Subject, is a Process called Smoking 5 packs, in a Day – Lacan’s response to Le Tiempou in Heidegger

2. The Hegelian Ticklish Subject What Is 'Negation of Negation'? - The Dialectical Anamorphosis - 3, 4, 5- The Speculative Identity of Substance and Subject – Even health being a Subject of Infinite Judgement shifted now to a parallax called Infinite self-judgement which is just how philosophy is a materialist process of dialectics not in fact a Hegelese identical though of course, we mean – Hegel and Heidegger – cars crash. The story of a car accident in Munich in 1987, and how Catastrophe is actually Beckett’s point

3. Ambedkar and Indian Materialism – what then of Jazz Listening Today with Cornel West in India

4. From Subject to Hegel, the internal reflection and determinate reflection of the thing itself as in-itself of speculative self-reference as posited reflection, something like the process of speaking in cruelty and art or Victor Hugo as current Event of Literature, or, as a Reader of the News on Nunes and Sanchez, even Syriza in Greece - Why the News Should be More Deconstructionist and Derridean, as Not Heideggerean at all - Ideological Interpellation - From Resistance to Contingency, how the man appears climbing down a staircase and lifting up his arms in antagonistic joking on Gandhi, and why he is not negated by Jewish people – and why the sublime is something like Ambedkar today, all Pure and Pure Being only, and in fact the subject as transparent – how Ambedkar is a Subject

I. On Heidegger

What problematic here is that Heidegger uses the notion of Geworfenheit, 'thrownness', into a finite contingent situation, and then of Entwurf, the act of authentically choosing one's way, on two levels whose relationship is not thought out: the individual and the collective one. On the individual level, the authentic encounter with death, which is 'always only mine', enables me to project my future in an authentic act of choice; but then, community is also determined as being thrown into a contingent situation within which it must choose-assume its destiny. Heidegger passes from the individual to the societal level by means of the notion of lettre: 'The authentic lettre of a possibility of existence that has been - the possibility that Dasein may choose its hero - is grounded existentially anticipatory resoluteness." The leap of faith as process here is unmistakably Kierkegaardian: a true Christian community is grounded in the fact that each of its members has to repeat the mode of existence freely assumed

by Christ, their hero. is a in in This passage from the 'thrown projection' of the individual Dasein who, an act of anticipatory decision, achieves an authentic mode of being, 'freely chooses his fate,' to a human community of a People which also, in a collective act of anticipatory decision qua repetition of a past possibility, authentically assumes its historial Destiny, is not phenomenologically grounded in an adequate way. The medium of collective (societal) being-there is not properly deployed: what Heidegger seems to be missing is simply that which Hegel designated as 'objective Spirit',, and so on, which is not yet the 'impersonal' das Man, but also forged into the process of collective Mitsein and shared ways, which though is then attacked by the Marxist subject who produces as Kojin Karatani’s brilliant reading of Transcritique goes, as in fact a salto-mortale in circulation and production process changes to C-M and M-C which then is also though class antagonism which remains ontic – the prospect of the ontic which is now class struggle which is the problem then with Ambedkar and even recent French structuralism, which is all about the antagonism as onticness or even daily life as unfolding within ontic Americanism, which is not somehow politicised into the subjective self-spirit of the objective spirit, a type of Jewish folktale on heroism in the process of what should be in fact – class struggle as eternal – the site or evental site again too ontic in Badiou of some subjective engagement with an Event, no the process is more like against Heidegger and Badiou both – the process of in fact their shared pact and compromise with a divine violence which is in fact a fused group which is again not ontic but in fact ontological and priorities of the most violent antagonism which is in fact the forging of class action. Something that Althusser calls too concrete for his own love for abstraction as an answer – now concrete process of class struggle as Marxists would argue – not as Sartre calls it – the real fighting of an a priori that is class struggle but in fact its split which is the a priori but as a subjective process closes to Luckacs, which is the inherent split of the subjective as primacy over the objective which then is in fact an idealist tailistic in fact class party which is the leading party in a process of Kierkegaardian and such existential in fact actions against in a traditional way of life. T

The key point not to be missed in Heidegger's analysis of historicity proper is the interconnection of the three temporal extases of time: when he speaks of 'thrown projection', this does not simply mean that a finite agent finds itself in a situation that limits its options; that it then analyses the potentialities allowed for by this finite situation, by its condition, chooses the possibility which best fits its interests and assumes it as its project. The point is that the future has a primacy: to be able to discern the possibilities opened up by the tradition into which an agent is thrown, one must already acknowledge one's engagement in a project - that is to say, the movement of repetition, as it were, retroactively reveals (and thus fully actualizes) that which it repeats. For this reason, Heidegger's 'decision', in the precise sense of anticipatory resoluteness [Ent-Schlossenheit], has the status of a forced choice. the Heideggerian decision qua repetition,is not a 'free choice' in the usual sense of the term.

(Such a notion of freely choosing between alternative possibilities is utterly foreign to Heidegger; he dismisses it as belonging to superficial Americanized liberal individualism.) Rather, it is fundamentally the choice of 'freely assuming' one's imposed destiny. This paradox, necessary if one is to avoid the vulgar libcral notion of freedom of choice, indicates the theological problematic of predestination and Grace: a true decision/choice (not a choice between a series of objects leaving my subjective position intact, but the fundamental choice by means of which I 'choose myself') presupposes that I assume a passive attitude of 'letting myself be chosen' - in short, free choice and Grace are strictly equivalent, or, as Deleuze put it, we really choose only when we are chosen: 'Ne choisit bien, ne choisit effectivement que celui qui est choisi.'12 To dispel the notion that we are dealing here with an obscurantisttheological problematic, let us evoke a more telling leftist example of proletarian class interpellation: when a subject recognizes himself as a proletarian revolutionary, when he freely assumes and identifies with the task of revolution, he recognizes himself as being chosen to accomplish this task. In general, the Althusserian notion of ideological interpellation involves the situation of 'forced choice' by means of which the subject emerges out of the act of freely choosing the inevitable - that is, in which she/he is given the freedom of choice on condition that she/ he makes the right choice: when an individual is addressed by an interpellation, she/he is 'invited to play a role in such a way that the invitation appears to have alrcady been answered by the subject before it was proposed, but at the same time the invitation could be refused'.13 Therein lies the ideological act of recognition, in which I recognize myself. When, say, I am accused of a crime and agree to defend myself, in the brilliant Victor Hugo, I presuppose myself as a free agent legally responsible for my acts. In her Internet discussion with Ernesto Laclau, Judith Butler made a nice Hegelian point about decision: it is not only that no decision is taken in an absolute void, that every decision is contextualized, is a decision-incontext, but contexts themselves: are in some ways produced by decisions, that is, there is a certain redoubling of decision-making.... There is first the decision to mark or delimit the context in which a decision [on what kinds of differences ought not to be included in a given polity] will be made, and then there is the marking off of certain kinds of differences as inadmissible. The undecidability here is radical: one can never reach a 'pure' context prior to a decision; every context is 'always-already' retroactively constituted by a decision (as with reasons to do something, which are always at least minimally retroactively posited by the act of decision they ground - only once we decide to believe do reasons to believe become convincing to us, not vice versa). Another aspect of this same point is that not only is there no decision without exclusion (i.e. every decision precludes a series of possibilities), but also the act of decision itself is made possible by some kind of exclusion: something must be excluded in order for us to become beings which make decisions. Is not the Lacanian notion of 'forced choice' a way to explain this paradox? Does not the primordial 'exclusion' which grounds decision (i.e. choice) indicate that the choice is, at a certain radically fundamental level, forced

- that I have a (free) choice only on condition that I make the proper choice - so that, at this level, one encounters a paradoxical choice which overlaps with its meta-choice: I am told what I must choose freely....

As for Heidegger's notion of authentic choice as a repetition, the parallel with Benjamin's notion of revolution as repetition, elucidated in his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History',14 is striking: here also, revolution is conceptualized as a repetition that realizes the hidden possibility of the past, so that a proper view of the past (the one that perceives the past not as a closed set of facts but as open, as involving a possibility that failed, or was repressed, in its actuality) opens only from the standpoint of an agent engaged in a present situation. The present revolution, in its attempt to liberate the working class, also retroactively redeems all failed past attempts at liberation - that is to say, the point of view of a present agent engaged in a revolutionary project suddenly makes visible what the objectivist/positivist historiography, constrained to facticity, is by definition blind to: the hidden potentialities of liberation that were crushed by the victorious march of the forces of domination. Read in this way, the appropriation of the past through its repetition in an anticipatory decision that enacts a project - this identification of fate and freedom, of assuming one's Destiny as the highest (albeit forced) free choice - does not involve a simple Nietzschean point that even the most neutral description of the past serves the present purposes of some power-political project. One must insist here on the opposition between the appropriation of the past from the standpoint of those who rule (the narrative of past history as the evolution leading to and legitimating their triumph) and the appropriation of that which, in the past, remained its utopian and failed ('repressed') potentiality. What Heidegger's description lacks is thus - to put it in a direct and somewhat crude way - insight into the radically antagonistic nature of every hitherto communal way of life. Heidegger's ontology is thus in fact 'political' (to refer to the title of Bourdieu's book on Heidegger): his endeavour to break through traditional ontology, and to assert as the key to the 'sense of being' man's decision to adopt a 'project' by means of which he actively assumes his 'thrownness' into a finite historical situation, locates the historico-political act of decision in the very heart of ontology itself: the very choice of the historical form of Dasein is in a sense 'political', it consists in an abyssal decision not grounded in any universal ontological structure.

Or - to put it in another way - Heidegger's political engagement was a kind of passage à l'acte in the Real that bears witness to the fact that he refused to go to the the Symbolic and call socio-Symbolic stuff relevant - to think out the theoretical consequences of his breakthrough in Being and Time.

2. Further
Aufforderung is not merely the secondary specification of the Anstoss, but its exemplary original case. It is important to bear in mind the two primary

meanings of Anstoss in German: check, obstacle, hindrance, something that resists the boundless expansion of our striving; and an impetus, a stimulus, something that incites our activity. Anstoss is not simply the obstacle the absolute I posits to itself in order to stimulate its activity - so that, by overcoming the selfposited obstacle, it asserts its creative power, like the games the proverbial perverted ascetic saint plays with himself by inventing ever new temptations and then, in successfully resisting them, confirming his strength. If the Kantian Ding an sich corresponds to the Freudian-Lacanian Thing, Anstoss is closer to objet petit a, to the primordial foreign body that 'sticks THE DEADLOCK OF TRANSCENDENTAL IMAGINATION 45 in the throat' of the subject, to the object-cause of desire that splits it up: Fichte himself defines Anstoss as the non-assimilable foreign body that causes the subject to divide into the empty absolute subject and the finite determinate subject, limited by the non-I. Anstoss thus designates the moment of the 'run-in'. If Anstoss were not 'purely subjective', if it were already the non-I, part of objectivity, we would fall back into 'dogmatism' - that is to say, Anstoss would effectively amount to no more than a shadowy remainder of the Kantian Ding an sich, and would thus bear witness to Fichte's inconsequentiality (the usual criticism of Fichte); if Anstoss were simply subjective, it would present case of the subject's hollow playing with itself, and we would never reach the level of objective reality - that is, Fichte would effectively be a solipsist (another common criticism of his philosophy). The crucial point is that Anstoss sets in motion the constitution of 'reality': at the beginning is the pure I with the non-assimilable foreign body at its heart; the subject constitutes reality by assuming a distance towards the Real of the formless Anstoss, and conferring on it the structure of objectivity.47 a to If Kant's Ding an sich is not Fichte's Anstoss, what is the difference between them? Or - to put it in another way - where do we find in Kant something that announces Fichte's Anstoss? One should not confuse Kant's Ding an sich with the 'transcendental object', which (contrary some confused and misleading formulations found in Kant himself) is not noumenal but the 'nothingness', the void of horizon of objectivity, of that which stands against the (finite) subject, the minimal form resistance which is not yet any positive determinate object that the subject encounters in the world - Kant uses the German expression Dawider, what is 'out there opposing itself to us, standing against us'. This Dawider is not the abyss of the Thing, it does not point to the dimension of of the 46 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT unimaginable; it is, on the contrary, the very horizon of openness towards objectivity within which particular objects appear to a finite subject. The Monstrous Fichte was a philosopher of the primacy of practical over theoretical Reason; so we are now also in a position to show how our reading of Kant affects the Kantian approach to the ethical problematic. In his Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, Heidegger endeavours to think the moral Law itself - that is, the problematic of practical Reason - according to the same model of the synthesis of imagination as pure auto-affection, as the unity of activity (spontaneity) and passivity (receptivity): in his moral experience, the subject submits himself to a Law that is not external but posited by himself, so that being affected by the Call of moral

Law is the ultimate form of self-affection - in it, as well as in the Law that character- izes autonomous subjectivity, autonomy and receptivity coincide. This is the origin of all the paradoxes of Heidegger's reading: Heidegger first reduces temporality and Law to pure self-affection of the subject, then rejects them for this very reason - because they remain within the constraints of subjectivity. In short, Heidegger himself generates the 'subjectivist' reading of Kant to which he then refers in rejecting him. Heidegger's devaluation of Kant's practical philosophy in his Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics belongs in the long line of critics, from Heinrich Heine and Feuerbach to Adorno and Horkheimer in Dialectic of Enlighten- ment, who dismiss the Critique of Practical Reason as Kant's betrayal of the subversive anti-metaphysical potential of his Critique of Pure Reason: in his ethical thought, Kant asserts freedom and moral Law as that on account of which the finite subject (man) is not constrained to phenomenal experience - that is, as a window on the purely rational noumenal domain, beyond or outside time: literally the domain of meta- physics. The price Kant pays for this is that he has to limit the scope, the grounding role, of transcendental imagination and its movement of temporalization: the experience of freedom and moral Law is not rooted in temporal self- affection.

As Rogozinski demonstrated, what is crucial here is the fate of the triad Beautiful/ Sublime/Monstrous: Heidegger ignores the Sublime that is, he links Beauty directly to the Monstrous (most evidently in his reading of Antigone in An Introduction to Metaphysicst): Beauty is the mode of apparition of the Monstrous; it designates one of the modalities of the Truth-Event that shatters our allegiance to the everyday run of things - that is, it derails our immersion in das Man (the way 'it is done'). This passing over the Sublime is directly linked to the insertion of Kant in the Platonic lineage of the Supreme Good - to Heidegger's dismissal of the Kantian ethical revolution: if the Beautiful is, as Kant put it, the symbol of the Good, then the Sublime is precisely the failed scheme of the ethical Law. The stakes in Heidegger's direct linking of the Beautiful to the Monstrous are thus higher than they may seem: the disappearance of the Sublime in Heidegger's reading of Kant is the obverse of his ignorance of the Kantian motif of the pure form of Law; the fact that the Kantian moral Law is 'empty', a pure form, radically affects the status of the Monstrous. How? Heidegger, of course, thematizes the Monstrous (or rather, the Uncanny, das Unheimliche, as he translates the 'daemonic' from Antigone's first great chorus): in his detailed reading of this chorus in An Introduction to Metaphysics, he deploys the contours of the overpowering violence of nature, of earth, as well as the violence of man who, by dwelling in language, throws the natural course of events 'off the rails' and exploits it for his own purposes. He insists repeatedly on the 'out-of-joint' character of man: not only is his fight against/with the powers of nature 'derailing'; the very institution of polis, of a communal order, is characterized as an act of violent imposition, as grounded in an abyssal decision. So Heidegger is well aware that every dwelling in the familiar everyday universe is grounded in a violent/monstrous act of resolutely

deciding/assuming one's fate: that since man is primordially 'out of joint', the very imposition of a 'home [heim]', of a communal site of dwelling, polis, is unheimlich, reposes on an excessive/violent deed. The problem is that this domain of Unheimliches remains for him the very domain of the disclosure of historical shape of being, of a world, grounded in impenetrable earth, in which man historically dwells, of the tension between earth (natural surroundings) and the shape of man's communal being. And, in so far as the particular shape of historical being is 'beauty', one can see the precise sense in which, for Hcidegger, Beauty and the Monstrous are codependent. The Kantian/Lacanian Monstrous, however, involves another dimension: a dimension not-yet-worldly, ontological, the disclosure of a historical shape of communal destiny of being, but a pre-ontological universe of the 'night of the world' in which partial objects wander in a state preceding any synthesis, like that in Hieronymus Bosch's paintings (which are strictly 50 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT correlative to the emergence of modern subjectivity). Kant himself opens up the domain of this uncanny pre-ontological spectrality, of the 'undead' apparitions, with his distinction between negative and infinite judgement.

3. Kant with David Lynch

Kant's notion of the transcendental constitution of reality thus opens up a specific 'third domain', which is neither phenomenal nor noumenal but stricto sensu pre-ontological. In Derridean terms, we could designate it as spectrality;

This notion is given a direct critico-ideological twist in John Carpenter's underrated film They Live (1988), in which a lonely drifter arrives in Los Angeles and discovers that our consumerist society is dominated by aliens, whose human disguises and subliminal advertising messages are visible only through special glasses: when we put these glasses on, we can perceive all around us ('Buy this!', 'Turn into this store!", etc.) which we otherwise notice and obey without being aware of them. Again, the charm of this idea lies in its very naivety: as if the surplus of an ideological mechanism over its visible presence, is itself materialized on another, 54 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT invisible level, so that, with special glasses on, we can literally ideology'...55 'see At the level of speech itself, a Paulinian distinction between the speech which is grace and that which is just speech, as a Paul’s woman diagnosis of speech is called in the Jerusalem Bible.

In the course of a dialectical reflexive turn, the subject is compelled to assume that the insufficiency of his knowledge with regard to reality signals the more radical insufficiency of reality itself 56 a THE TICKLISH SUBJECT (see the standard Marxist notion of the 'critique of ideology', whose basic premiss is that the 'inadequacy' of the ideologically distorted view of social reality is not a simple epistemological mistake, but

simultaneously signals the much more troubling fact that something must be terribly wrong with our social reality itself - only a society which is 'wrong' in itself generates 'wrong' awareness of itself). Hegel's point here is very precise: not only the inherent inconsistencies and contradictions of our knowledge not prevent it from functioning as 'true' knowledge of reality, but there is 'reality' (in the most usual sense of 'hard external reality' as opposed 'mere notions') only in so far as the domain of the Notion is alienated from itself, split, traversed by some radical deadlock, caught in some debilitating inconsistency. do to To get an approximate idea of this dialectical vortex, let us recall the classic opposition of the two mutually exclusive notions of light: light as composed of particles and light as consisting of waves - the 'solution' of quantum physics (light is both at the same time) transposes this opposition into the 'thing itself', with the necessary result that 'objective reality' itself loses its full ontological status - that it turns into something that is ontologically incomplete, composed of entities whose status is ultimately virtual. Or think of the way the universe we reconstruct in our minds while reading a novel is full of 'holes', not fully constituted: when Conan Doyle describes Sherlock Holmes's flat, it is meaningless to ask exactly how many books there were on the shelves - the writer simply did not have a precise idea of it in his mind. What, however, if- on the level of symbolic meaning, at least - the same goes for reality itself? Abraham Lincoln's famous You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all of the time' is logically ambiguous: does it mean that there are some people who can always be fooled, or that on every occasion someone or other is bound to be fooled? What, however, if it is wrong to ask 'What did Lincoln really mean?' Isn't the most probable solution to this enigma that Lincoln himself was not aware of the ambiguity - he simply wanted to make a witty point, and the phrase 'imposed itself on him' because 'it sounded good'? And what if such a situation in which one and the same signifier (here: the same line) 'sutures' the fundamental ambiguity and inconclusiveness which persists at the level of the signified content pertains also to what we call 'reality'? What if our social reality is 'symbolically constructed' also in this radical sense, so that in order to maintain the appearance of its consistency, an empty signifier (what Lacan called the Master-Signifier) has to cover up and conceal the ontological gap? THE DEADLOCK OF TRANSCENDENTAL IMAGINATION 57 So the gap that forever separates the domain of (symbolically mediated, i.e. ontologically constituted) reality from the elusive and spectral real that precedes it is crucial: what psychoanalysis calls 'fantasy' is the endeavour to close this gap by (mis) perceiving the pre-ontological Real as simply another, 'more fundamental', level of reality - fantasy projects on to the pre-ontological Real the form of constituted reality (as in the Christian notion of another, suprasensible reality). The great merit of Lynch is that he resists this properly metaphysical temptation to close the gap between these pre-ontological phenomena and the level of reality. Apart from his primary visual procedure for conveying the spectral dimension of the Real (the excessive close-up on the depicted object, which renders it unreal), one should focus on the way

Lynch plays with uncanny non-localizable sounds. The nightmare sequence of The Elephant Man, for example, is accompanied by a strange vibrating noise that seems to transgress the border separating interior from exterior: it is as if, in this noise, the extreme externality of a machine coincides with the utmost intimacy of the bodily interior, with the rhythm of the palpitating heart. Does not this coincidence of the very core of the subject's being, of his/her lifesubstance, with the externality of a machine, offer a perfect illustration of the Lacanian notion of ex-timacy? On the level of speech, perhaps the best illustration of this gap is the scene in Lynch's Dune when, in his confrontation with the Emperor, the space guild representative utters unintelligible whispers transformed into articulate speech only by passing through a microphone - in Lacanian terms, through the medium of the big Other. In Twin Peaks as well, the dwarf in the Red Lodge speaks an incomprehensible, distorted English, rendered intelligible only with the help of subtitles, which assume here the role of the microphone, that is, the medium of the big Other.... In both cases, Lynch reveals the gap that forever separates pre-ontological proto-speech, this 'murmur of the Real', from the fully constituted logos. This brings us to the fundamental feature of dialectical-materialist ontology: the minimal gap, the delay, which forever separates an event 'in itself' from its symbolic inscription/registration; this gap can be discerned in its different guises from quantum physics (according to which an event 'becomes itself', is fully actualized, only through its registration in its surroundings - that is, the moment its surroundings 'take note' of it) to the procedure of 'double take' in the classic Hollywood comedies (the victim of a fraud or an accident first perceives the event or the statement which means catastrophe to him calmly, even with irony, unaware of its consequences; then, after a minimal time lapse all of a sudden he 58 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT shudders or stiffens - like the father who, upon learning that his unmarried innocent daughter is pregnant, first calmly remarks 'OK, what's the big deal?', and only later, after a couple of seconds, turns pale and starts to shout...). What we are dealing with here is - in Hegelese the minimal gap between In-itself and For-itself; Derrida described this gap apropos of the notion of gift: as long as a gift is not recognized, it 'is' not fully a gift; the moment it is recognized, it is no longer a pure gift, since it is already caught in the cycle of exchange

3. The Politics of Truth, Le-sans or the PCF as a Reader of St Paul 'The beginning is the negation of that which begins with it' - Schelling's statement applies perfectly to the itinerary of the four contemporary political philosophers who began as Althusserians and then elaborated their own distinctive position by distancing themselves from their starting point. The cases that immediately spring to mind are, of course, those Étienne Balibar and Jacques Rancière. of Back in the 1960s, Balibar was Althusser's favoured pupil and privileged collaborator; all his work in the last decade, however, is sustained by a kind of avoidance of (and silence about) the name 'Althusser' (significantly, his key essay on Althusser bears the title 'Tais-toi, Althusser!: 'Shut up [remain silent], Althusser!'). In

a revealing commemorative essay, Balibar describes the last phase of Althusser's theoretical activity (even prior to his unfortunate mental health problems) as a systematic pursuit of (or exercise in) self-destruction, as if Althusser was caught in the vortex of a systematic undermining and subverting of his own previous thcoretical propositions. Against the background of this debris of the Althusserian theoretical edifice, Balibar painfully endeavours to formulate his own position, not always in a fully consistent way, often combining the standard Althusserian references (Spinoza) with references to Althusser's archenemies (note the growing importance of Hegel in Balibar's recent essays). Rancière, who also began as a strict Althusserian (with a contribution to Lire le Capital), then (in La leçon d'Althusser), accomplished a violent gesture of distancing, which enabled him to follow his own path, focusing on what he perceived as the main negative aspect of Althusser's thought: his theoreticist elitism, his insistence on the gap forever separating the universe of scientific cognition from that of ideological (mis)recognition in which the common masses are immersed. Against this stance, which 128 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT allows theoreticians to 'speak for' the masses, to know the truth about them, Rancière endeavours again and again to elaborate the contours of those magic, violently poetic moments of subjectivization in which the excluded ('lower classes') put forward their claim to speak for themselves, to effect a change in the global perception of the social space so that their claims have a legitimate place in it. In a more mediated way, the same also holds for Ernesto Laclau and Alain Badiou. Laclau's first book (Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory) was still strongly Althusserian (the notion of ideological interpellation plays a central role in it); his further development, especially in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (written with Chantal Mouffe), could be read as a kind of 'postmodernist' or 'deconstructionist' displacement of the Althusserian edifice: the distinction between science and ideology collapses, since the notion of ideology is universalized as the struggle for hegemony that rends the very heart of every social formation, accounting for its fragile identity and, simultaneously, forever preventing its closure; the notion of the subject is reconceptualized as the very operator of hegemony. Finally, there is the case of Alain Badiou. Is not Badiou also intimately related to Althusser, not only on the level of his personal intellectual biography (he began as a member of the Lacano-Althusserian legendary Cahiers pour l'Analyse group in the 1960s; his first booklet was published in Althusser's Théorie series) but also on the inherent theoretical level: his opposition of knowledge (related to the positive order of Being) and truth (related to the Event that springs from the void in the midst of being) seems to reverse the Althusserian opposition of science and ideology: Badiou's 'knowledge' is closer to (a positivist notion of) science, while his description of the Truth-Event bears an uncanny resemblance to Althusserian 'ideological interpellation'. The Truth-Event... The axis of Badiou's theoretical edifice is as the title of his main work indicates - the gap between Being and Event.2 'Being' stands for the positive ontological order accessible to Knowledge, for the infinite multitude of what 'presents itself' in our

experience, categorized in genuses and species in accordance with its properties. Badiou provides an elaborated analysis of Being. At the bottom, as it were, is the presentation of the pure multiple, the not yet symbolically structured multitude of experience, that which is given; this multitude is not a multitude of 'Ones', since counting has not yet taken place. Badiou calls any particular consistent multitude (French society; modern art...) a 'situation'; a situation is structured, and it is its structure that allows us to 'count [the situation] as One'. Here, however, the first cracks in the ontological edifice of Being already appear: for us to 'count [the situation] as One', the 'reduplication' proper to the symbolization (symbolic inscription) of a situation must be at work: that is, in order for a situation to be 'counted as One', its structure must always-already be a meta-structure that designates it as one (i.e. the signified structure of the situation must be redoubled in the symbolic network of signifiers). When a situation is thus 'counted as One', identified by its symbolic structure, we have the 'state of the situation'. Here Ranciere in fact is playing on the ambiguity of the term state: 'state of things' as well as State (in the political sense) - there is no 'state of society' without a 'state' in which the structure of society is re-presented/redoubled. Although it clearly belongs to the situation, is not 'counted' by it, properly included in it (the 'non-integrated' rabble in a social situation, etc.): this element is presented, but not re-presented. On the other hand, there is the excess of re-presentation over presentation: the agency that brings about the passage from situation to its state (State in society) is always in excess with regard to what it structures: State power is necessarily 'excessive', it never simply and transparently represents society (the impossible liberal dream of a state reduced to the service of civil society), but acts as a violent intervention in what it represents. This, then, is the structure of Being. From time to time, however, in a wholly contingent, unpredictable way, out of reach for Knowledge of Being, an Event takes place that belongs to a wholly different dimension it attaches itself precisely to the Void of every situation, to its inherent inconsistency and/or its excess. The Event is the Truth of the situation that makes visible/legible what the 'official' situation had to 'repress', but it is also always localized - that is to say, the Truth is always the Truth of a specific situation. The French Revolution, for example, is the Event which makes visible/legible the excesses and inconsistencies, the 'lie', of the ancien régime, and it is the Truth of the ancien régime situation, localized, attached to it. An Event thus involves its own series of determinations: the Event itself; its naming (the designation 'French Revolution' is not an objective categorizing but part of the Event itself, the way its followers perceived and symbolized their activity); its ultimate Goal (the society of fully realized emancipation, of freedom-equalityfraternity); its 'operator' (the political movements struggling for the Revolution; and, last but not least, its subject, the agent who, on behalf of the Truth-Event, intervenes in the historical multiple of the situation and discerns/identifies in it signs-effects of the Event. What defines the subject is his fidelity to the Event: the subject comes after the Event and persists in discerning its traces within his situation. The subject is thus, for Badiou, a finite contingent emergence: not only is Truth not

'subjective' in the sense of being subordinated to his whims, but the subject himself 'serves the Truth' that transcends him; he is never fully adequate to the infinite order of Truth, since the subject always has to operate within a finite multiple of a situation in which he discerns the signs of Truth.

Now PCF these days opts for Le-sans – let us read the following as journalism, mixed with history and then argue for the translation of the above into its PCF text.

For example, in France, during the first Mitterrand government in the early 1980s, all well-meaning Leftists were sceptical about Minister of Justice Robert Badinter's intention to abolish the death penalty and introduce other progressive reforms of the penal code. Their stance was 'Yes, of course we support him; but is the situation yet ripe for it? Will the people, terrified by the rising crime rate, be willing to swallow it? Isn't this a case of idealistic obstinacy that can only weaken our government, and do us more harm than good?'. Badinter simply ignored the catastrophic predictions of the opinion polls, and persisted - with the surprising result that, all of a sudden, it was the majority of the people who changed their minds and started to support him. of A similar event happened in Italy in the mid 1970s, when there was a referendum on divorce. In private, the Left, even the Communists - who, course, supported the right to divorce - were sceptical about the outcome, fearing that the majority of people were not yet mature enough, that they would be frightened by the intense Catholic propaganda depicting abandoned children and mothers, and so on. To the great surprise of everyone, however, the referendum was a great setback for the Church and the Right, since a considerable majority of 60 per cent voted for the THE POLITICS OF TRUTH 135 right to divorce. Events like this do occur in politics, and they are authentic Events belying shameful 'post-ideological realism': they are not momentary enthusiastic outbursts occasionally disturbing the usual depressive/conformist/utilitarian run of things, only to be followed by an inexorable sobering disillusionment 'the morning after'; on the contrary, they are the moment of Truth in the overall structure of deception and lure. The fundamental lesson of postmodernist politics is that there is no Event, that 'nothing really happens', that the Truth-Event is a passing, illusory short circuit, a false identification to be dispelled sooner or later by the reassertion of difference or, at best, - if, that is, one speaks from a subjectively engaged position, or - to put it more formally - if one includes in the designated situation the act of naming itself: the chaotic events in France at the end of the eighteenth century can be identified as the 'French Revolution' only for those who accept the 'wager' that such an Event exists. Badiou formally defines intervention as 'every procedure by means of which a multiple is recognized as an event'7 - so 'it will remain forever doubtful if there was an event at all, except for the intervenor [l'intervenant] who decided that he belonged to the situation'.8 Fidelity to the Event designates the continuous effort of traversing the field of knowledge from the standpoint of Event, intervening in it, searching for

the signs of Truth. Along these lines, Badiou also interprets the Pauline triad of Faith, Hope and Love: Faith is faith in the Event (the belief that the Event - Christ's rising from the dead - really took place); Hope is the hope that the final reconciliation announced by the Event (the Last Judgement) will actually occur; Love is the patient struggle for this to happen, that is, the long and arduous work to assert one's fidelity to the Event. Badiou calls the language that endeavours to name the Truth-Event the 136 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT of 'subject-language'.

A theorist of the Communist revolution is not someone who, after establishing by means of objective study that the future belongs to the working class, decides to take its side and to bet on the winner: the engaged view permeates his theory from the very outset. Within the Marxist tradition, this notion of partiality as not only not an obstacle to but a positive condition of Truth was most clearly articulated by Georg Lukács in his early work History and Class Consciousness, and in a more directly messianic, proto-religious mode by Walter Benjamin in 'Theses on the Philosophy of History': 'truth' emerges when a victim, from his present catastrophic position, gains a sudden insight into the entire past as a series of catastrophes that led to his current predicament. So, when we read a text on Truth, we should be careful not to confuse the level of Knowledge with the level of Truth. For example, although Marx himself used 'proletariat' as synonymous with 'the working class' normally, one can none the less discern in his work a clear tendency to conceive 'the working class' as a descriptive term belonging to the domain of Knowledge (the object of 'neutral' sociological study, a social stratum subdivided into components, etc.); whereas 'proletariat' designates the operator of Truth, that is, the engaged agent of the revolutionary struggle.

Le sans, on the contrary, it is Law itself which, 'universal' as it may appear, is ultimately 'particularist' (a legal order always imposes specific duties and rights on us, it is always a Law defining a specific community at the expense of excluding the members of other ethnic, etc., communities), while Divine Grace is truly universal, that is, non-exclusive, addressing all humans independently of their race, sex, social status, and so on. We thus have two lives, the finite biological life and the infinite Life of participating in the Truth-Event of Resurrection. Correspondingly, there are also two deaths: the biological death and Death in the sense of succumbing to the 'way of all flesh'. How does St Paul determine this opposition of Life and Death as the two subjective, existential attitudes? Here we touch the crux of Badiou's argument, which also directly concerns psychoanalysis: for Badiou, the opposition of Death and Life overlaps with the opposition of Law and Love. For St Paul, succumbing to the temptations of the flesh does not simply mean indulging in unbridled 148 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT terrestrial conquests (the search for pleasures, power, wealth...) irrespective of the Law (of moral prohibitions). On the contrary, his central tenet, elaborated in what is probably the (deservedly) most famous passage in his writings, Chapter 7, verse 7, in the Epistle to the Romans, is that there is no Sin prior to or independent of the Law:

what comes before it is a simple innocent prelapsarian life forever lost to us mortal human beings. The universe we live in, our 'way of all flesh', is the universe in which Sin and Law, desire and its prohibition, are inextricably intertwined: it is the very act of Prohibition that gives rise to the desire for its transgression, that is, fixes our desire on the prohibited object: What then should we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin, I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, You shall not covet.' But sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, produces in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died, and the very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.... I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it.13 This passage, of course, must be seen in its context; in the whole of this part of the Epistle, the problem St Paul struggles with is how to avoid the trap of perversion, that is, of a Law that generates its transgression, since it needs it in order to assert itself as Law. For example, in Romans 3: 5-8, St Paul fires off a barrage of desperate questions: But if our injustice serves to confirm the justice of God, what should we say? That God is unjust to inflict wrath on us?... But if through my falsehood God's truthfulness abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? And why not say (as some people slander us by saying that we say) 'Let us do evil so that good may come'? This 'Let us do evil so that good may come [from it]' is the most succinct definition of the short circuit of the perverse position. Does this make God a closet pervert who brings about our fall so that He may then redeem us through His sacrifice, or - to quote Romans 11: 11- 'have they stumbled so as to fall', that is, did we stumble (become involved in Sin, in the 'way of all flesh') because God needed our Fall as part of His plan of THE POLITICS OF TRUTH 149 ultimate Redemption? If this is how things are, then the answer to the question 'Should we continue to sin in order that grace may abound? (Romans 6: 1) is affirmative: it is only and precisely by indulging in Sin that we enable God to play His part as our Saviour. But St Paul's entire effort is to break out of this vicious cycle in which the prohibitive Law and its transgression generate and support each other. In his Philosophical Notebooks, Lenin made the well-known statement that everyone who aims at really understanding Marx's Capital should read the whole of Hegel's Logic in detail. He then did it himself, supplementing quotes from Hegel with hundreds of 'sis' and marginal comments like: 'The first part of this sentence contains an ingenious dialectical insight; the second part is theological rubbish!' A task awaiting true Lacanian dialectical materialists is to repeat the same gesture with St Paul, since, again, everyone who aims at really understanding Lacan's Ecrits should read the entire text of Romans and Corinthians in detail: one cannot wait for a Lacanian volume

of Theological Notebooks, with quotes accompanied by hundreds of 'sis' and comments like: 'The first part of this sentence provides the deepest insight into Lacanian ethics, while the second part is just theological rubbish!"...14 So, back to the long quote from Romans: the direct result of the intervention of the Law is thus that it divides the subject and introduces a morbid confusion between life and death: the subject is divided between (conscious) obedience to the Law and (unconscious) desire for its transgression generated by the legal prohibition itself. It is not I, the subject, who transgress the Law, it is non-subjectivized 'Sin' itself, the sinful impulses in which I do not recognize myself, and which I even hate. Because of this split, my (conscious) Self is ultimately experienced as 'dead', as deprived of living impetus; while 'life', ecstatic affirmation of living energy, can appear only in the guise of 'Sin', of a transgression that gives rise to a morbid sense of guilt. My actual life-impulse, my desire, appears to me as a foreign automatism that persists in following its path independently of my conscious Will and intentions. St Paul's problem is thus not the standard morbid moralistic one (how to crush transgressive impulses, how finally to purify myself of sinful urges), but its exact opposite: how can I break out of this vicious cycle of the Law and desire, of the Prohibition and its transgression, within which I can assert my living passions only in the guise of their opposite, as a morbid death drive? How would it be possible for me to experience my life-impulse not as a foreign automatism, as a blind 'compulsion to repeat' making me 150 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT transgress the Law, with the unacknowledged complicity of the Law itself, but as a fully subjectivized, positive Yes!' to my Life? Here St Paul seem fully to endorse Hegel's point that there is Evil only for the gaze that perceives something as Evil: it is the Law itself that not only opens up and sustains the domain of Sin, of sinful urges to transgress it, but also finds a perverse and morbid satisfaction in making us feel guilty about it. The ultimate result- of the rule of the Law thus consists of all the well-known twists and paradoxes of the superego: I can enjoy only if I feel guilty about it, which means that, in a self-reflexive turn, I can take pleasure in feeling guilty; I can find enjoyment in punishing myself for sinful thoughts; and so on. So when one speaks of the 'morbid fascination of the death drive', and so forth, he is not resorting to general platitudes, but referring to a very precise 'Pauline' reading of the psychoanalytic notions he uses: the entire complex entanglement of Law and desire - not only illicit sinful desires that go against the Law, but this morbid intertwining of life and death in which the 'dead' letter of the Law perverts my enjoyment of life itself, changing it into a fascination with death; this perverted universe in which the ascetic who flagellates himself on behalf of the Law enjoys more intensely than the person who takes innocent pleasure in earthly delights - is what St Paul designates as 'the way of the Flesh' as opposed to 'the way of the Spirit': 'Flesh' is not flesh as opposed to the Law, but flesh as an excessive self-torturing, mortifying morbid fascination begotten by the Law (see Romans 5: 20: 'law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied'). As it emphasizes, here St Paul is unexpectedly close to his great detractor Nietzsche, whose problem was also how to break away from the vicious

cycle of the self-mortifying morbid denial of Life: for him the Christian 'way of the Spirit' is precisely the magic break, the New Beginning that delivers us from this debilitating morbid deadlock and enables us to open ourselves to the Eternal Life of Love without Sin (i.e. Law and the guilt the Law induces). In other words, it is as if St Paul himself has answered Dostoevsky's infamous 'If there is no God, everything is permitted!' in advance - for St Paul, precisely since there is the God of Love, everything is permitted to the Christian believer - that is to say, the Law which regulates and prohibits certain acts is suspended. For a Christian believer, the fact that he does not do certain things is based not on prohibitions (which then generate the transgressive desire to indulge precisely in these things) but in the positive, affirmative attitude of Love, which renders mcaningless the accomplishment of acts which bear witness the fact that I am not free, but still dominated by an external force: to THE POLITICS OF TRUTH 151 '"All things are lawful for me", but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful for me", but I will not be dominated by anything.'(I Corinthians 7: 12 - 'All things are lawful for me' is often translated also as 'Nothing is prohibited to me'!) This rupture with the universe of the Law and transgression is most clearly articulated in a very provoking 'analogy from marriage': its Do you not know, brothers and sisters - for I am speaking to those who know the law - that the law is binding on a person only during that person's lifetime? Thus a married woman is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies, she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from the law, and if she marries another man, she is not an adulteress. In the same way, my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive. (Romans 7: 1-6) To become a true Christian and embrace Love, one should thus 'die to the law', to break up the vicious cycle of 'sinful passions, aroused by the law'. As Lacan would have put it, one has to undergo the second, symbolic death, which involves the suspension of the big Other, the symbolic Law that hitherto dominated and regulated our lives. So the crucial point is that we have two 'divisions of the subject' which should not be confused. On the one hand, we have the division of the subject of the Law between his conscious Ego, which adheres to the letter of the Law, and his decentred desire which, operating 'automatically', against the subject's conscious will, compels him to 'do what he hates', to transgress the Law and indulge in illicit jouissance. On the other hand, we have the more radical division between this entire domain of the Law/desire, of the prohibition generating its transgression, and the properly Christian way of Love which marks a New Beginning, breaking out of the deadlock of Law and its transgression. 152 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT Between the Two Deaths What stance does the Lacanian 'divided subject' adopt towards these two divisions? It may

appear that the answer is simple and straightforward: psychoanalysis is the theory that conceptualizes, brings into daylight, the paradoxical structure of the first division. Is not Badiou's description of the intertwining of Law and desire full of implicit (sometimes even explicit) references to and paraphrases of Lacan? Is not the ultimate domain of psychoanalysis the connection between the symbolic Law and desire? Is not the multitude of perverse satisfactions the very form in which the connection between Law and desire is realized? Is not the Lacanian division of the subject the division that concerns precisely the subject's relationship to the symbolic Law? Furthermore, is not the ultimate confirmation of this Lacan's 'Kant avec Sade', which directly posits the Sadeian universe of morbid perversion as the 'truth' of the most radical assertion of the moral weight of symbolic Law in human history (Kantian ethics)? (The ironic point not to be missed here is that Foucault conceives of psychoanalysis as the final chain in the link that began with the Christian confessional mode of sexuality, irreducibly linking it to Law and guilt, while - at least in Badiou's reading - St Paul, the founding figure of Christianity, does the exact opposite: he endeavours to break the morbid link between Law and desire....) However, the crucial point for psychoanalysis here is: does psychoanalysis remain within the confines of this 'morbid' masochistic obsession with death, of the perverse intermingling of Life and Death which characterizes the dialectics of the prohibitory Law that generates the desire for its transgression? Perhaps the best way to answer this question is to start with the fact that Lacan himself also focuses on the samene passage from St Paul in his elaboration of the link between Law and desire, referring to the Thing as the impossible object of jouissance accessible only via the prohibitory Law, as its transgression. This passage should be quoted in full: Is the Law the Thing? Certainly not. Yet I can only know of the Thing by means of the Law. In effect, I would not have had the idea to covet it if the Law hadn't said: 'Thou shalt not covet it.' But the Thing finds a way by producing in me all kinds of covetousness thanks to the commandment, for without the Law the Thing is dead. But even without the Law, I was once alive. But when the commandment appeared, the Thing flared up, returned once again, and I met my death. And for me, the commandment that was supposed to lead to life THE POLITICS OF TRUTH 153 turned out to lead to death, for the Thing found a way and thanks to the commandment seduced me; through it I came to desire death. believe that for a little while now some of you at least have begun to suspect that it is no longer I who have been speaking. In fact, with one small change, namely, 'Thing' for 'sin', this is the speech of Saint Paul on the subject of the relations between the law and the sin in the Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 7, paragraph 7. . The relationship between the Thing and the Law could not be better defined than in these terms.... The dialectical relationship between desire and the Law causes our desire to flare up only in relation to the Law, through which it becomes the desire for death. It is only because of the Law that sin... takes on an excessive, hyperbolic character. Freud's discovery - the ethics of psychoanalysis - does it leave us clinging to that dialectic?15 a The crucial thing here is the last phrase, which

clearly indicates that, for Lacan, there is 'a way of discovering the relationship to das Ding somewhere beyond the Law'16 - the whole point of the ethics of psychoanalysis is to formulate the possibility of a relationship that avoids the pitfalls of the superego inculpation that accounts for the 'morbid' enjoyment of sin, while simultaneously avoiding what Kant called Schwärmerei, the obscurantist claim to give voice to (and thus to legitimize one's position by reference to) a spiritual illumination, a direct insight into the impossible Real Thing. When Lacan formulates his maxim of psychoanalytic ethics, 'ne pas céder sur son désir, that is, 'don't compromise, don't give way on your desire', the desire involved here is no longer the transgressive desire generated by the prohibitory Law, and thus involved in a 'morbid' dialectic with the Law; rather, it is fidelity to one's desire itself that is elevated to the level of ethical duty, so that 'ne pas céder sur son désir is ultimately another way of saying 'Do your duty!'17 It would therefore be tempting to risk a Badiouian-Pauline reading of the end of psychoanalysis, determining it as a New Beginning, a symbolic 'rebirth' - the radical restructuring of the analysand's subjectivity in such a way that the vicious cycle of the superego is suspended, left behind. Does not Lacan himself provide a number of hints that the end of analysis opens up the domain of Love beyond Law, using the very Pauline terms to which Badiou refers? Nevertheless, Lacan's way is not that of St Paul or Badiou: psychoanalysis is not 'psychosynthesis'; it does not already posit a 'new harmony', a new Truth-Event; it - as it were - merely wipes the slate clean for one. However, this 'merely' should be put in quotation marks, because it is Lacan's contention that, in this negative gesture of 'wiping the slate clean', something (a void) is confronted which is already 154 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT 'sutured' with the arrival of a new Truth-Event. For Lacan, negativity, a negative gesture of withdrawal, precedes any positive gesture of enthusiastic identification with a Cause: negativity functions as the condition of (im) possibility of the enthusiastic identification - that is to say, it lays the ground, opens up space for it, but is simultaneously obfuscated by it and undermines it. For this reason, Lacan implicitly changes the balance between Death and Resurrection in favour of Death: what 'Death' stands for at its most radical is not merely the passing of earthly life, but the 'night of the world', the self-withdrawal, the absolute contraction of subjectivity, the severing of its links with 'reality' - this is the 'wiping the slate clean' that opens up the domain of the symbolic New Beginning, of the emergence of the 'New Harmony' sustained by a newly emerged Master-Signifier. Here, Lacan parts company with St Paul and Badiou: God not only is but always-already was dead - that is to say, after Freud, one cannot directly have faith in a Truth-Event; every such Event ultimately remains a semblance obfuscating a preceding Void whose Freudian name is death drive. So Lacan differs from Badiou in the determination of the exact status of this domain beyond the rule of the Law. That is to say: like Lacan, Badiou delineates the contours of a domain beyond the Order of Being, beyond the politics of service des biens, beyond the 'morbid' superego connection between Law and its transgressive desire. For Lacan, however, the Freudian topic of the death drive cannot be accounted for in the terms of this connection: the 'death

drive' is not the outcome of the morbid confusion of Life and Death caused by the intervention of the symbolic Law. For Lacan, the uncanny domain beyond the Order of Being is what he calls the domain 'between the two deaths', the pre-ontological domain of monstrous spectral apparitions, the domain that is 'immortal', yet not in the Badiouian sense of the immortality of participating in Truth, but in the sense of what Lacan calls lamella, of the monstrous 'undead' object-libido.18 This domain, in which Oedipus (or King Lear, to take another exemplary casc) finds himself after the Fall, when his symbolic destiny is fulfilled, is for Lacan the proper domain 'beyond the Law'. That is to say: in his reading of the Oedipus myth, the early Lacan already focuses on what the usual version of the 'Oedipus complex' leaves out: the first figure of what is 'beyond Oedipus', which is Oedipus himself after he has fulfilled his destiny to the bitter end, the horrifying figure of Oedipus at Colonnus, this embittered old man with his thoroughly uncompromising attitude, cursing everyone around him.... Does not this figure of Oedipus at THE POLITICS OF TRUTH 155 Colonnus confront us with the inherent deadlock, the impossibility of jouissance, concealed by its Prohibition? Was he not the one who transgressed the Prohibition and paid the price by having to assume this impossibility? To illustrate the position of Oedipus at Colonnus, Lacan compares it to that of the unfortunate Mr Valdemar in Poe's famous story, the person who, via hypnosis, is put to death and then reawakened, imploring the people who observe the horrible experiment: 'For God's sake! - quick! - quick! - put me to sleep - or, quick! - waken me! quick!
Rancière makes the same point as Badiou: he emphasizes that politics is not a consequence of the incompleteness of the social subject - there is no ontological guarantee or foundation of politics in the a priori Void of Being, in the subject as constitutive Lack/Finitude/Incompleteness; one looks in vain for the philosophico-transcendental 'condition of possibility' of politics. The order of 'police positive order of Being) is in itself full, there are no holes in it; it is only the political act itself, the gesture of political subjectivization, that adds to it the 'distance towards itself and dislodges its self-identity.. (see Jacques Rancière, La mésentente, Paris: Galilée 1995, pp. 43-67). The Lacanian answer to this would be that here Rancière fetishizes the order of police. failing to recognize how this order itself relies on the excessive gesture of the Master, which is a stand-in for the political Lack - the 'gentrification', the positivization, of the properly political excess. In short, we do not have the full positivity of the police order perturbed from time to time by the heterogeneous intervention of political subjectivity: this positivity itself always-already relies on the (disavowal of some) excessive gesture of the Master. Or - to put it in yet another way - politics is not a consequence of the (pre-political) gap gap inn the order of Being or non-coincidence of the social subject with itself: the fact that the social subject is never complete and self-identical means that the social being itself is always-already bused on (disavowed) gesture of politicization and, as such, thoroughly political. 28. This difference between Lacan and Badiou also has precise consequences for the appreciation of concrete political events. For Badiou, the disintegration of Eastern European Socialism was not a Truth-Event: apart from giving rise

to a brief popular enthusiasm, the dissident ferment did not succeed in transforming itself into a stable movement of followers patiently engaged in the militant fidelity to the Event, but soon disintegrated, so that what have today is either the return to vulgar liberal parliamentary capitalism or the advocacy of racist ethnic fundamentalism. However, if we accept the Lacanian distinction between the act as a negative gesture of saying 'No!", and its positive aftermath, locating the key dimension the primordial negative gesture; then the process of disintegration did none the less we in 170 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT produce a true act in the guise of the enthusiastic mass movement of saying 'No!' to the Communist regime on behalf of authentic solidarity; this negative gesture counted more than its later failed positivization. 29. The case of Antigone, of course, is more complex, since she puts her life at stake and enters the domain 'in between the two deaths' precisely in order to prevent her brother's second death: to give him a proper funeral rite that will secure his eternalization in the symbolic order. 30. Another problem is that Kant often shrank from his own discovery, identifying freedom as noumenal (see Chapter 1 above). 31. Again, see Chapter 1 above 4 Political Subjectivization and Its Vicissitudes that 32. Badiou's Kantianism can also be discerned in the way his political project gets caught in the quintessential Kantian paradox of 'spurious infinity' in our approach to the Ideal: for Badiou, the ultimate goal of political activity is to achieve presence without representation, is, a situation no longer redoubled in its State; however, the political act itself in its essence is directed against the State; it is an intervention into the existing State undermines its functioning so it needs a pre-existing State in the same sense that needs an enemy in order to assert oneself by fighting it. that one Badiou, Balibar, Rancière As Fredric Jameson has often emphasized, the triad TraditionalismModernism-Postmodernism provides a logical matrix that can also be applied to a particular historical content. There are clearly three main readings of Nietzsche: traditional (the Nietzsche of the return to premodern aristocratic warrior values against decadent Judaeo-Christian modernity), modern (the Nietzsche of the hermeneutics of doubt and ironic self-probing), and postmodern (the Nietzsche of the play of appearances and differences). Does not the same hold for today's three main philosophico-political positions: the (traditionalist) communitarians (Taylor and others), the (modern) universalists (Rawls, Habermas), and the (postmodern) 'dispersionists' (Lyotard and others)? What they all share is a reduction of the political, some version of pre-political ethics: there is no politics proper in a closed community ruled by a traditional set of values; universalists ground politics in a proceduralist a priori of discursive (or distributive) ethics; 'dispersionists' condemn politics as unifying, totalitarian, violent, and so on, and assume the position of ethical critics who reveal (or voice) the ethical Wrong or Evil committed by politics, without engaging in an alternative political project. Each of the three positions thus involves a pragmatic (performative) paradox of its own. The communitarians' problem is that in today's global society their position is a priori faked, marked by a split between enunciated and enunciation: they themselves do not speak from the particular position of a closed

community, their position of enunciation is already universal (their mistake is thus the opposite of that of the universalist, who conceals the particular kernel of his alleged universality). The universalists' problem is that their universalism is always too narrow, 172 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT grounded in an exception, in a gesture of exclusion (it represses the différend, does not even allow it to be properly formulated). And finally, the opposite problem of 'dispersionists' is that they are too all-inclusive: how do we pass from their 'ontological' assertion of multitude to ethics (of diversity, tolerance...)?2 Three contemporary French political philosophers (Alain Badiou, Étienne Balibar and Jacques Rancière) have formulated a kind of inherent self-criticism of these three positions - that is, each of them can be said to focus on the inherent split of the position in question: • Is not Badiou the anti-communitarian communitarian? Does he not introduce a split in the notion of community, a split between positive communities grounded in the order of Being (nation-state, etc.), and the 'impossible' community-to-come grounded in fidelity to the TruthEvent, like the community of believers in Christ or the revolutionary community (or, one is tempted to add, the psychoanalytic community)? Is not Balibar the anti-Habermasian Habermasian, in so far as he accepts universality as the ultimate horizon of politics, but none the less focuses on the inherent split in the universal itself between (in Hegelese) an abstract and a concrete universal, between the concretely structured universal order and the infinite/unconditional universal demand of égaliberté which threatens to undermine it? Is not Rancière the anti-Lyotardian Lyotardian? By elaborating the gap between the positive global order (what he calls la politique/police) and political interventions which perturb this order and give word to le tort (to the Wrong, to those who are not included, whose statements are not comprehensible in the ruling political/police space), Rancière opts for a political mode of rebellion against the universal police/ political order. A fourth name should be added to this triad, a kind of constitutive exception to this series: the 'anti-Schmittian Schmittian' Ernesto Laclau (who works with Chantal Mouffe). Laclau acknowledges the fundamental, unsurpassable status of antagonism, yet instead of fetishizing it in a heroic warfare conflict, he inscribes it into the symbolic as the political logic of the struggle for hegemony. A series of obvious differences notwithstanding, the theoretical edifices of Laclau and Badiou are united by a deep homology. Against the Hegelian vision of the 'concrete universal', of the reconciliation between Universal and Particular (or between Being and POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 173 Event), which is still clearly discernible in Marx, they both start by asserting a constitutive and irreducible gap that undermines the selfenclosed consistency of the ontological edifice: for Laclau, this gap is the gap between the Particular and the empty Universal, which necessitates the operation of hegemony (or the gap between the differential structure of the positive social order - the logic of differences - and properly political antagonism, which involves the logic of equivalence); for Badiou, it is the gap between Being and Event (between the order of Being -- structure, state of situation, knowledge - and the event of Truth, Truth as Event). In both cases, the problem is how to break

out of the self-enclosed field of ontology as a description of the positive universe; in both cases, the dimension which undermines the closure of ontology has an 'ethical' character - it concerns the contingent act of decision against the background of the 'undecidable' multiplicity of Being; consequently, both authors endeavour to conceptualize a new, post-Cartesian mode of subjectivity which cuts its links with ontology and hinges on a contingent act of decision. Both authors accomplish the return to a proto-Kantian formalism: they both elaborate a quasi-transcendental theory (of ideological hegemony or of Truth), which is destined to serve as the a priori framework for contingent empirical occurrences of hegemony or Truth. In both cases, however, this formal character of the theory is linked, by a kind of half-acknowledged umbilical cord, to a concrete and limited politico-historical constellation and practice (in Laclau, the post-Marxist strategy of the multitude of emancipatory struggles for recognition; in Badiou, the anti-State 'marginal' revolutionary politics in factories, on campuses, etc.). The his same goes for the other two authors. In the case of Rancière, obvious paradigm is the 'spontaneous' rebellion of the proletarian masses (not the mythical Marxian proletariat as the Subject of History, but actual groups of exploited artisans, textile workers, working women and other 'ordinary' people) who reject the police frame defining their 'proper' place and, in a violent politico-poetic gesture, take the floor, start to speak for themselves. Balibar is more focused on the universe of 'civility', even decency: his problem is how, today, we are to maintain a civic space of dialogue in which we can articulate our demand for human rights; for that reason. Balibar resists the anti-State rhetorics of the New Left of the 1960s (the notion of the State as a mechanism of 'oppression' of people's initiatives) and emphasizes the role of the State as the (possible) guarantor of the space of civic discussion. All these authors oscillate between proposing a neutral formal frame 174 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT that describes the working of the political field, without implying any specific prise de parti, and the prevalence given to a particular leftist political practice. This tension was already clearly discernible in the work of Michel Foucault, who serves as the point of reference for most of these authors: his notion of Power is presented as a neutral tool that describes the way the entire field of existing power structures and resistances to them functions. Foucault liked to present himself as a detached positivist, laying bare the common mechanisms that underlie the activity of passionately opposed political agents; on the other hand, one cannot avoid the impression that Foucault is somehow passionately on the side of the 'oppressed', of those who are caught in the machinery of 'discipline and punishment', and aims to give them the chance to utter, to enable them to start to 'speak for themselves'.... Do we not find, on a different level, the same tension in Laclau? Laclau's notion of hegemony describes the universal mechanism of ideological 'cement' which binds any social body together, a notion that can analyse all possible sociopolitical orders, from Fascism to liberal democracy; on the other hand, Laclau none the less advocates a determinate political option, 'radical democracy'.3 Hegemony and Its Symptoms So let us proceed like proper materialists, and begin with the exception to the series: with

Laclau, whose proposition that today 'the realm of philosophy comes to an end and the realm of politics begins'4 strangely echoes Marx's thesis on the passage from theoretical interpretation to revolutionary transformation. Although, of course, in Laclau this thesis has a different meaning, there is nevertheless a common thread: in both cases, any theoretical approach that endeavours to grasp and mirror adequately 'what is' (what Marx called the 'world-view') is denounced as something which, unbeknown to itself, relies on a contingent practical act - that is to say, in both cases the ultimate solution to philosophical problems is practice. For Marx, the philosophical problem of freedom finds its solution in the revolutionary establishment of a free socicty; while for Laclau, the breakdown of the traditional closed ontology reveals how features that we (mis)perceive as ontologically positive rely on an ethicopolitical decision that sustains the prevailing hegemony. So what is hegemony? Those who still remember the good old days of Socialist Realism are well aware of the key role played by the notion of the 'typical' in its theoretical edifice: truly progressive Socialist literature POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 175 should depict 'typical' heroes in 'typical' situations. Writers who, for example, presented a predominantly bleak picture of the Soviet reality were not accused simply of lying - the accusation was that they provided a distorted reflection of social reality by focusing on phenomena which were not 'typical', which were sad remainders of the past, instead of focusing on phenomena which were 'typical' in the precise sense of expressing the deeper underlying historical tendency of the progress towards Communism. A novel which presented a new Socialist type of man who dedicated his life to the happiness of all the people, of course, depicted a minority phenomenon (the majority of the people were not yet like that), but none the less a phenomenon which enabled us to identify the truly progressive forces active in the social situation. Ridiculous as this notion of the 'typical' may sound, there is a grain of truth in it - it lies in the fact that cach apparently universal ideological notion is always hegemonized by some particular content which colours its very universality and accounts for its efficiency. In the present rejection of the social welfare system by the New Right in the USA, for example, the very universal notion of the present welfare system as inefficient is contaminated by the more concrete representation of the notorious single African-American mother, as if social welfare were, in the last resort, a programme for single black mothers - the particular case of 'the single black mother' is silently conceived of as 'typical' of the universal notion of social welfare, and what is wrong with it.... The same goes for every universal ideological notion: one always has to look for the particular content which accounts for the specific efficiency of an ideological notion. In the case of the Moral Majority campaign against abortion, for example, the 'typical' case is the exact opposite of the (jobless) black mother: a successful and sexually promiscuous career woman who gives priority to her professional life over her 'natural' assignment of motherhood (in blatant contradiction to the facts, which tell us that the great majority of abortions occur in lower-class families with several children). This specific 'twist', the particular content which is promulgated as 'typical' of the

universal notion, is the element of fantasy, of the phantasmic background/support of the universal ideological notion - in Kant's terms, it plays the role of 'transcendental schematism', translating the empty universal notion into a notion which directly relates and applies to our 'actual experience'. As such, this phantasmic specification is by no means a mere insignificant illustration or exemplification: it is on this level of which particular content will count as 'typical' that ideological battles are won or lost. To go back to our example of abortion: the 176 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT moment we perceive as 'typical' the case of abortion in a large lower-class family unable to cope economically with another child, the perspective changes radically....3 'Single unemployed mother' is thus a sinthome in the strict Lacanian sense: a knot, a point at which all the lines of the predominant ideological argumentation (the return to family values, the rejection of the welfare state and its 'uncontrolled' spending, etc.) meet. For that reason, if we 'untie' this sinthome, the efficiency of its entire ideological edifice is suspended. We can see now in what sense the psychoanalytic sinthome is to be opposed to the medical symptom: the latter is a sign of some more fundamental process taking place on another level. When one claims, say, that fever is a symptom, the implication is that we should not cure only the symptom, but attack its causes directly. (Or, in social sciences, when one claims that adolescent violence is a symptom of the global crisis of values and the work ethic, the implication is that one should attack the problem 'at its root', by directly addressing problems of the family, employment, etc., not only by punishing the offenders.) The sinthome, in contrast, is not a 'mere symptom', but that which holds together the 'thing itself - if one unties it, the 'thing itself' disintegrates. For that reason, psychoanalysis actually does cure by addressing the sinthome. This example makes it clear in what sense 'the universal results from a constitutive split in which the negation of a particular identity transforms this identity into the symbol of identity and fullness as such':6 the Universal emerges within the Particular when some particular content starts to function as the stand-in for the absent Universal - that is to say, the universal is operative only through the split in the particular. A couple of years ago, the English yellow press focused on single mothers as the source of all the evils of modern society, from the budget crisis to juvenile delinquency - in this ideological space, the universality of the 'modern social Evil' was operative only through the split of the figure of 'single mother' into itself in its particularity and itself as the stand-in for the 'modern social Evil'. Owing to the contingent character of this link between the Universal and the particular content which functions as its stand-in (i.e. the fact that this link is the outcome of a political struggle for hegemony), the existence of the Universal always relies on an empty signifier: 'Politics is possible because the constitutive impossibility of society can only represent itself through the production of empty signifiers.'7 Since 'society doesn't exist', its ultimate unity can be symbolized only in the guise of an empty signifier hegemonized by some particular content - the struggle for this content is the political struggle. In other POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 177 words, politics exists because 'society doesn't exist': politics is the struggle for

the content of the empty signifier which represents the impossibility of Society. The worn-out phrase 'the politics of the signifier' is thus fully justified: the order of signifier as such is political and, vice versa, there is politics outside the order of the signifier. The space of politics is the gap between the series of 'ordinary' signifiers (S_2) and the empty MasterSignifier (S,). no The only thing to add to Laclau's formulation is that his anti-Hegelian twist is perhaps, all too sudden: We are not dealing here with 'determinate negation' in the Hegelian sense: while the latter comes out of the apparent positivity of the concrete and 'circulates' through contents that are always determinate, our notion of negativity depends on the failure in the constitution of all determination. What, however, if the infamous 'Hegelian determinate negation' aims precisely at the fact that every particular formation involves a gap between the Universal and the Particularor, in Hegelese, that a particular formation never coincides with its (universal) notion - and that it is this very gap that brings about its dialectical dissolution? Let us take the example of the State: there is always a gap between the notion of the State and its particular actualizations; Hegel's point here, however, is not that, in the course of the teleological process of history, positively existing, actual states are gradually approaching their notion, until finally, in the modern post-revolutionary state, actuality and notion overlap. Hegel's point, rather, is that the deficiency of actually existing, positive states with regard to their notion is grounded in an inherent deficiency of the very notion of the State; thus the split is inherent to the notion of the State - it should be reformulated as the split between the State qua the rational totality of social relations and the series of irreducible antagonisms which, already on the level of the notion, prevent this totality from fully actualizing itself (the split between State and civil society on account of which the unity of the State is ultimately always expericnced by individuals as 'imposed from outside', so that individual subjects are never fully 'themselves' in the State, are never able fully to identify the Will of the State with their own). Again, Hegel's point here is not that the State which would fully fit its notion is impossible - it is possible; the catch is, rather, that it is no longer a State, but a religious community. What one should change is the notion of the State itself - that is, the very standard by means of which one measures the deficiency of actual states. The struggle for ideologico-political hegemony is thus always the 178 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT struggle for appropriation of the terms that are 'spontaneously' experienced as 'apolitical', as transcending political boundaries. No wonder the name of the strongest dissident opposition force in the former Eastern European countries was Solidarity: a signifier of the impossible fullness of society if ever there was one. It was as if, in those couple of years, what Laclau calls the logic of equivalence was brought almost to its extreme: 'Communists in power' served as the embodiment of non-society, of decay and corruption, magically uniting everyone against themselves, including disaffected 'honest Communists'. Conservative nationalists accused them of betraying Polish interests to the Soviet master; business-orientated individuals saw in them an obstacle to their unbridled capitalist activity; for the Catholic Church, Communists

were amoral atheists; for the farmers, they represented the force of violent modernization which disrupted their way of life; for the artists and intellectuals, Communism was synonymous in their everyday expericnce with oppressive and stupid censorship; the workers saw themselves not only exploited by the Party bureaucracy but, even worse, humiliated by claims that this had been done on their behalf, in their own name; finally, disillusioned old Leftists perceived the regime as the betrayal of 'true Socialism'. The impossible political alliance between all these divergent and potentially antagonistic positions was possible only under the banner of a signifier which stood, as it were, on the very border which separates the political from the prepolitical, and 'solidarity' was the perfect candidate for this role: it was politically operative as designating the 'simple' and 'fundamental' unity of human beings which should link them beyond all political differences. Now, however, when this magic moment of universal solidarity is over, the signifier which, in some post-Socialist countries, is emerging as the signifier of what Laclau calls the 'absent fullness' of society is honesty: it forms the focus of the spontaneous ideology of 'ordinary people' caught in the economic-social turbulence in which hopes of a new fullness of Society which should follow the collapse of Socialism were cruelly betrayed, so that in their eyes, the 'old guard' (ex-Communists) and exdissidents who entered the ranks of power joined in exploiting them even more than before under the banner of democracy and freedom.... The battle for hegemony, of course, is now focused on the particular content which will give a spin to this signifier: what does 'honesty' mean? For a conservative, it means returning to traditional moral and religious values, as well as purging the social body of the remainders of the old regime; for a Leftist, social justice and resistance to rapid privatization; and so forth. The same measure - returning land to the Church, for example - is thus POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 179 to 'honest' from the conservative standpoint and 'dishonest' from the leftist standpoint - each position silently (re) defines 'honesty' to accommodate it to its own ideologico-political position. It would be wrong, however, claim that the conflict is ultimately about different meanings of the term 'honesty': what gets lost in this 'semantic clarification' is that each position claims that their honesty is the only 'true' honesty: the struggle is not simply a struggle between different particular contents, it is a struggle inherent the Universal itself.9 to So how does a particular content succeed in displacing another content as a stand-in for the Universal? Laclau's answer is readability: in a concrete situation of post-Socialism, 'honesty' as the significr of the absent fullness of Society will be hegemonized by the particular content which makes the everyday experience of engaged individuals more conyincingly 'readable - which enables them more effectively to organize their life-experience into a consistent narrative. Of course, 'readability' is not a neutral critcrion, it depends on ideological struggle: the fact that, after the collapse of the standard bourgeois narrative in the Germany of the early 1930s, which was unable to account for the global crisis, Nazi antiSemitism rendered this crisis 'more convincingly rcadable' than the socialist-revolutionary narrative is the contingent result of a series of overdetermined factors. Or,

to put it in another way: this 'readability does not imply a simple relationship of competition between a multitude of narratives/descriptions and the extra-discursive reality, where the narrative which is most 'adequate' with regard to reality wins: the relationship is circular and self-relating: the narrative already predetermines what we shall experience as 'reality'. One is tempted to propose a way of simultaneously thinking of Laclau's notion of ideological universality as empty, as the frame within which different particular contents fight for hegemony, and the classic Marxist notion of ideological universality as 'false' (privileging a particular interest). Both of them bring into play the constitutive gap between the Universal and the Particular, albeit in a different way. For Laclau, this gap is the gap between the absent fullness of the Universal and a contingent particular content that acts as a stand-in for this absent fullness; for Marx, it is the gap within the (particular) content of the Universal, that is, the gap between the 'official' content of the Universal and its unacknowledged presuppositions, which involve a set of exclusions. Let us take the classic example of human rights. The Marxist symptomal reading can convincingly demonstrate the particular content which gives the specific bourgeois ideological spin to the notion of human rights: 180 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT 'universal human rights are in fact the right of white, male, private owners to exchange freely on the market, exploit workers and women, as well as exert political domination...' - tendentially, at least, this approach considers the hidden 'pathological' spin to be constitutive of the very form of the Universal. Against this quick dismissal of the universal form itself as ideological (concealing an unacknowledged particular content), Laclau insists on the gap between the empty universality and its determinate content: the link between the empty universal notion of 'human rights' and its original particular content is contingent - that is to say, the moment they were formulated, 'human rights' started to function as an empty signifier whose concrete content could be contested and widened - what about the human rights of women, children, members of nonwhite races, criminals, madmen...? Each of these supplementary gestures does not simply apply the notion of human rights to ever new domains (women, blacks ... can also vote, own property, actively participate in public life, etc.), but retroactively redefines the very notion of human rights. Let us recall the gist of Marx's notion of exploitation: exploitation is not simply opposed to justice - Marx's point is not that workers are exploited because they are not paid the full value of their work. The central thesis of Marx's notion of 'surplus-value' is that a worker is exploited even when he is fully paid; exploitation is thus not opposed to the 'just equivalent exchange; it functions, rather, as its point of inherent exception - there is one commodity (the workforce) which is exploited precisely when it is 'paid its full value'. (The further point not to be missed is that the production of this excess is strictly equivalent to the universalization of the exchange-function: the moment the exchange-function is universalized - that is, the moment it becomes the structuring principle of the whole of economic life - the exception emerges, since at this point the workforce itself becomes a commodity exchanged on the market. Marx in effect announces here the Lacanian notion of the

Universal which involves a constitutive exception.) The basic premiss of symptomal reading is thus that every ideological universality necessarily gives rise to a particular 'ex- timate' element, to an element which - precisely as an inherent, necessary product of the process designated by the universality - simultaneously undermines it: the symptom is an example which subverts the Universal whose example it is.10 The gap between the empty signifier and the multitude of particular contents which, in the fight for hegemony, endeavour to function as the representatives of this absent fullness, is thus reflected within the Particular itself, in the guise of the gap that separates the particular hegemonic it POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 181 content of an ideological universality from the symptom that undermines (say, separates the bourgeois notion of just and equivalent exchange' from the exchange between capital and workforce as the particular exchange that involves exploitation precisely in so far as it is 'just' and 'equivalent'). We should therefore consider three, not just two, levels: the empty Universal (justice'), the particular content which hegemonizes the empty Universal ('just and equivalent exchange'), and the individual, the symptomatic excess which undermines this hegemonic content (exchange between capital and workforce). One can see immediately in what sense the individual is the dialectical unity of Universal and Particular: the individual (the symptomatic excess) bears witness to the gap between the Universal and the Particular: to the fact that the Universal is always 'false' in its concrete existence (hegemonized by some particular content which involves a series of exclusions). Let us make the same point from yet another perspective. Some years ago, Quentin Skinner pointed out that a possible discussion between a traditional liberal and a Marxist radical about the scope of the term 'political' involves more than the meaning of that term." For the liberal, the sphere of the political is restricted to a specific sphere of reaching decisions which concern the administration of public affairs - not only intimate (sexual) interests, but also art, science, even the economy, are outside its scope. For the Marxist radical, of course, the political pervades every sphere of our lives, from the social to the most intimate, and the very perception of something as 'apolitical', 'private', and so on, is grounded in a disavowed political decision. Both standard philosophical versions, 'rcalist' and 'nominalist', fail to account for this struggle for the Universal. According to the realist account, there is a 'true' content of the notion of the political to be unearthed by a truc theory, so that once we gain access to this content, we can measure how close to it different theories of the political have come. The nominalist account, on the contrary, reduces the whole problem to the different nominal definitions of the term: there is no real conflict; the two parties are simply using the word 'political' in a different sense, conferring on it a different scope. What both accounts miss, what disappears in both of them, is the antagonism, the struggle inscribed into the very heart of the 'thing itself'. In the realist account, there is a true content of the universal notion to be discovered, and the struggle is simply the conflict between different erroneous readings of it - that is, it arises out of our misperception of the true content. In the nominalist account, struggle

again arises out of an 182 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT epistemological confusion, and is thus neutralized into a peaceful coexistence of the plurality of meanings. What gets lost in both cases is the fact that the struggle for hegemony (for the particular content which will function as the stand-in for the universality of the political) is groundless: the ultimate Real which cannot be further grounded in some ontological structure. to Here, however, one should add again that if the Marxist's operation is be effective, it has to involve the symptomal reading of the liberal's position, which endeavours to demonstrate how the liberal's constriction of the scope of the 'political' has to disavow - to exclude violently - the political character of something which, according to the liberal's own definition of the term, should enter the scope of the political; and, furthermore, how this very exclusion of something from the political is a political gesture par excellence. The standard example: the liberal definition of 'private family as apolitical naturalizes - and/or changes into hierarchical relations nature, grounded in pre-political psychological attitudes, in differences in human in a priori cultural constants, and so on - a whole set of relations relations. subordination and exclusion that actually depend on political power life of Enter the Subject Laclau, How does subjectivity enter this process of hegemonic universalization? For the 'subject' is the very agent which accomplishes the operation of hegemony - which sutures the Universal to a particular content. Although Laclau's and Badiou's notions of the subject seems to be very similar (in both cases, the subject is not a substantial agent but emerges in the course of an act of decision/choice that is not grounded in any pre-given factual Order), they are none the less separated by different stances towards 'deconstruction'. Laclau's move is deconstructive - that is why, for him, the operation of hegemony in the course of which the subject emerges is the clementary matrix of ideology: hegemony involves a kind of structural short circuit between the Particular and the Universal, and the fragility of every this hegemonic operation is grounded in the ultimately 'illusory' character of short circuit; the task of theory is preciscly to 'deconstruct' it, that is, the to demonstrate contingent how every hegemonic identification is inherently unstable, outcome of a struggle - in short, for Laclau, every hegemonic operation is ultimately 'ideological'. For Badiou, in contrast, a POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 183 Truth-Event is that which cannot be 'deconstructed', reduced to an effect of an intricate, overdetermined texture of 'traces'; here Badiou introduces the tension between the Necessity of a global situation and the contingent emergence of its Truth. For Badiou (in his anti-Platonic mode, despite his love of Plato), Necessity is a category of veracity, of the order of Being, while Truth is inherently contingent, it can occur or not. So if, against the deconstructionist and/or postmodern politics of 'undecidability' and 'semblance', Badiou - to paraphrase Saint-Just's well-known comment on 'happiness as a political factor' - wants to (re) assert truth as a political factor, this does not mean that he wants to return to the premodern grounding of politics in some eternal neutral order of Truth. For Badiou, Truth itself is a theologico-political notion: theological in so far as religious revelation is the unavowed paradigm of his notion of the Truth-Event;

political because Truth is not a state to be perceived by means of a neutral intuition, but a matter of (ultimately political) engagement. Consequently, for Badiou, subjectivization designates the event of Truth that disrupts the closure of the hegemonic ideological domain and/or the existing social edifice (the Order of Being); while for Laclau, the gesture of subjectivization is the very gesture of establishing a (new) hegemony, and is as such the elementary gesture of ideology.12 In a way, everything seems to hinge on the relationship between Knowledge and Truth. Badiou limits Knowledge to a positive encyclopaedic grasp of Being which is, as such, blind to the dimension of Truth as Event: Knowledge knows only veracity (adequation), not Truth, which is 'subjective' (not in the standard sense of subjectivism, but linked to a 'wager', to a decision/choice which in a way transcends the subject, since the subject himself/herself is nothing but the activity of pursuing the consequences of the Decision). Is it not a fact, however, that every concrete, socially operative field of Knowledge presupposes a Truth-Event, since it is ultimately a kind of 'sedimentation' of an Event, its 'ontologization', so that the task of analysis is precisely to unearth the Event (the ethico-political decision) whose scandalous dimension always lurks behind 'domesticated' knowledge?13 We can also see now the gap which separates Badiou from Laclau: for Badiou, an Event is a contingent rare occurrence within the global order of Being; while for Laclau (to put it in Badiou's terms), any Order of Being is itself always a 'sedimentation' of some past Event, a 'normalization' of a founding Event (for example, the Church as the Institution of Order is sedimented from the Event of Christ, say) - every positive ontological order already relies on a disavowed ethicopolitical decision. 184 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT Laclau and Badiou nevertheless share a hidden reference to Kant. That is to say, the ultimate philosophical question that lurks behind all this is that of Kantian formalism. The horizon of Laclau's central notion of hegemony is the constitutive gap between the Particular and the Universal: the Universal is never full; it is a priori empty, devoid of positive content; different particular contents strive to fill this gap, but every particular that succeeds in exerting the hegemonic function remains a temporary and contingent stand-in that is forever split between its particular content and the universality it represents.... Do we not encounter here the paradoxical logic of desire as constitutively impossible, sustained by a constitutive lack (the absent fullness of the empty signifier) that can never be supplied by any positive object, that is, by a constitutive 'out of joint' of the Particular with respect to the Universal...? What, however, if this impossible desire to make up for the lack, to overcome the 'out of joint', is not the ultimate fact? What if, beyond (or, rather, beneath) it, one should presuppose not the fullness of a Foundation, but the opposite striving: an uncanny active will to disrupl? (It was Hegel who, apropos of Understanding, emphasized how, instead of complaining about the abstract, negative quality of Understanding, how Understanding replaces the immediate fullness of life with dry abstract categories, one should praise the infinite power of Understanding that is capable of tearing asunder what belongs together in nature, positing as separate what remains in reality joined together.)

4. The Political and Its Disavowals

If, then, the notion of hegemony expresses the elementary structure of ideological domination, are we condemned to shifts within the space of hegemony, or is it possible to suspend - temporarily, at least - its very mechanism? Jacques Rancière's claim is that such a subversion does occur, and that it even constitutes the very core of politics, of a proper political event. What, for Rancière, is politics proper?16 A phenomenon which, for the first time, appeared in Ancient Greece when the members of demos (those with no firmly determined place in the hierarchical social edifice) not only demanded that their voice be heard against those in power, those who exerted social control - that is, they not only protested the wrong [le tort] they suffered, and wanted their voice to be heard, to be recognized as included in the public sphere, on an equal footing with the ruling oligarchy and aristocracy - even more, they, the excluded, those with 188 no THE TICKLISH SUBJECT fixed place within the social edifice, presented themselves as the representatives, the stand-ins, for the Whole of Society, for the true Universality ('we the "nothing", not counted in the order - are the people, we are All against others who stand only for their particular privileged interest'). In short, political conflict designates the tension between the structured social body in which each part has its place, and 'the part of no part' which unsettles this order on account of the empty principle of universality - of what Balibar calls égaliberté, the principled equality of all men qua speaking beings. Politics proper thus always involves a kind of short circuit between the Universal and the Particular: the paradox of a singulier universel, a singular which appears as the standin for the Universal, destabilizing the 'natural' functional order of relations in the social body. This identification of the non-part with the Whole, of the part of society with no properly defined place within it (or resisting the allocated subordinated place within it) with the Universal, is the elementary gesture of politicization, discernible in all great democratic events from the French Revolution (in which le troisième état proclaimed itself identical to the Nation as such, against the aristocracy and the clergy) to the demise of ex-European Socialism (in which dissident 'forums' proclaimed themselves representative of the entire society against the Party nomenklatura). In this precise sense, politics and democracy are synonymous: the basic aim of antidemocratic politics always and by definition is and was depoliticization - that is, the unconditional demand that 'things should go back to normal', with each individual doing his or her particular job.... And, as Rancière proves against Habermas, the political struggle proper is therefore not a rational debate between multiple interests, but the struggle for one's voice to be heard and recognized as the voice of a legitimate partner: when the 'excluded', from the Greek demos to Polish workers, protested against the ruling elite (aristocracy or nomenklatura), the true stakes were not only their explicit demands (for higher wages, better working conditions, etc.), but their very right to be heard and recognized as an equal partner in the debate - in Poland, the nomenklatura lost the moment it had to accept

Solidarity as an equal partner. of These sudden intrusions of politics proper undermine Rancière's order police, the established social order in which each part is properly accounted for. Rancière, of course, emphasizes how the line of separation between police and politics is always blurred and contested: in the Marxist tradition, say, 'proletariat' can be read as the subjectivization of the 'part of no part' elevating its injustice into the ultimate test of universality and, POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 189 simultaneously, as the operator which will bring about the establishment of a post-political rational society.17 Sometimes the shift from politics proper to police can be only a matter of a change from the definite to the indefinite article, like the East German crowds demonstrating against the Communist regime in the last days of the GDR: first they shouted 'We are the people!' ['Wir sind das Volk!'], thereby performing the gesture of politicization at its purest - they, the excluded counter-revolutionary 'scum' of the official Whole of the People, with no proper place in the official space (or, more precisely, with only titles like 'counter-revolutionaries', 'hooligans', or - at best - 'victims of bourgeois propaganda' reserved for them), claimed to stand for the people, for 'all'; a couple of days later, however, the slogan changed into 'We are a/one people!" ['Wir sind ein Volk!'], clearly signalling the closure of the momentary authentic political opening, the reappropriation of the democratic impetus by the thrust towards the reunification of Germany, which meant rejoining Western Germany's liberal-capitalist police/political order. In Japan, the caste of untouchables is called the burakumin: those who are involved in contact with dead flesh (butchers, leatherworkers, gravediggers) and are sometimes even referred to as eta ('much filth'). Even now, in the 'enlightened' present, when they are no longer openly despised, they are silently ignored - not only do companies still avoid hiring them, or parents allowing their children to marry them, but, under the 'politically correct' pretence not of offending them, one prefers to ignore the issue. However, the crucial point, and the proof of the pre-political (or, rather, non-political) 'corporate' functioning of Japanese society, is the fact that although voices are heard on their behalf (we could simply mention the great and recently dead Sue Sumii who, in her impressive series of novels The River with No Bridge, used the reference to burakumin to expose the meaninglessness of the entire Japanese caste hierarchy - significantly, her primordial traumatic experience was the shock when, as a child, she witnessed how, in order to honour the Emperor, a relative of hers scratched the toilet used by the visiting Emperor to preserve a piece of his shit as a sacred relic), the burakumin did not actively politicize their destiny, did not constitute their position as that of singulier universel, claiming that, precisely as the 'part of no part', they stand for the true universality of Japancse society.18 There is a series of disavowals of this political moment, of the proper logic of political conflict: 190 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT arche-politics: 'communitarian' attempts to define a traditional close, organically structured homogeneous social space that allows for no void in which the political moment-event can emerge; para-politics: the attempt to depoliticize politics (to translate it into police logic): one accepts political conflict, but reformulates it into a

competition, within the representational space, between acknowledged parties/agents, for the (temporary) occupation of the place of executive power;19 Marxist (or Utopian Socialist) meta-politics: political conflict is fully asserted, but as a shadow-theatre in which events whose proper place is on Another Scene (of economic processes) are played out; the ultimate goal of 'true' politics is thus its self-cancellation, the transformation of the 'administration of people' into the 'administration things' within a fully self-transparent rational order of collective Will;20 of the fourth form, the most cunning and radical version of the disavowal (not mentioned by Rancière), is what I am tempted to call ultra-politics: the attempt to depoliticize the conflict by bringing it to an extreme via the direct militarization of politics - by reformulating it as the war between 'Us' and 'Them', our Enemy, where there is no common ground for symbolic conflict - it is deeply symptomatic that, rather than class struggle, the radical Right speaks of class (or sexual) warfare.21 What we have in all these four cases is thus an attempt to gentrify the properly traumatic dimension of the political: something emerged in Ancient Greece under the name of demos demanding its rights, and, from the very beginning (i.e. from Plato's Republic) to the recent revival of liberal 'political philosophy', 'political philosophy' was an attempt to suspend the destabilizing potential of the political, to disavow and/or regulate it in one way or another: bringing about a return to a prepolitical social body, fixing the rules of political competition, and so forth.22 'Political philosophy' is thus, in all its different forms, a kind of 'defence-formation', and perhaps its typology could be established via reference to the different modalities of defence against some traumatic experience in psychoanalysis. It may seem, however, that psychoanalysis, the psychoanalytic approach to politics, also involves the reduction of the proper political dimension. That is to say, when one approaches politics through the psychoanalytic network, one usually focuses on Freud's elaboration of the notion of the 'crowd' apropos of the Army and the POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 191 Church. This approach, however, seems to provoke justified criticism: are not the Army and the Church precisely examples of the disavowal of the proper political dimension, that is, the two forms of social organization in which the logic of collective deliberation and decision on public affairs which defines the political space is replaced by a clear hierarchical chain of command? Is this not a proof by negation that psychoanalysis is unable to define the properly political space: the only form of 'sociability' it can articulate is the 'totalitarian' distortion/obfuscation of the political? Hannah Arendt seemed to point in this direction when she emphasized the distinction between political power and the mere exercise of (social) violence: organizations run by direct non-political authority - by an order of command that is not politically grounded authority (Army, Church, school) - represent examples of violence [Gewalt], not of political Power in the strict sense of the term. Here, however, it would be productive to introduce the distinction between the public symbolic Law and its obscene supplement:23 the notion of the obscene superego double-supplement of Power implies that there is no Power without violence. Power always has to rely on an

obscene stain of violence; political space is never 'pure', but always involves some kind of reliance on 'pre-political' violence. Of course, the relationship between political power and pre-political violence is one of mutual implication: not only is violence the necessary supplement of power, (political) power itself is always-already at the root of every apparently 'non-political' relationship of violence. The accepted violence and direct relationship of subordination in the Army, the Church, the family, and other 'non-political' social forms is in itself the 'reification' of a certain ethico-political struggle and decision - a critical analysis should discern the hidden political process that sustains all these 'non-' or 'prepolitical' relationships. In human society, the political is the englobing structuring principle, so that every neutralization of some partial content as 'non-political' is a political gesture par excellence. The (Mis) Uses of Appearance Within these four disavowals of the political moment proper, the most interesting and politically pertinent is the case of meta-politics, in which - to put it in the terms of Lacan's matrix of the four discourses - the place of the 'agent' is occupied by knowledge. Marx presented his position as that of 'scientific materialism'; that is, meta-politics is a politics which legitimizes itself by a direct reference to the scientific status of its knowledge (it is 192 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT tion this knowledge which enables meta-politics to draw a line of distinction between those immersed in politico-ideological illusions and the Party basing its historical intervention on knowledge of actual socioeconomic processes). This knowledge (of class society and the relations of producin Marxism) suspends the classic opposition of Sein and Sollen, Being and the Ought, of what Is and the ethical Ideal: the ethical Ideal towards which the revolutionary subject strives is directly grounded in coincides with) the 'objective', 'disinterested' scientific knowledge social processes - this coincidence opens up a space for 'totalitarian' violence, since in this way acts which run against the most elementary norms of ethical decency can be legitimized as grounded in the (insight into) historical Necessity (the mass killing of members of the 'bourgeois class' is justified by the scientific insight that this class is already in itself 'condemned to disappear', past its 'progressive role', etc.). of (or of That is the difference between the standard destructive - even murderous- dimension of strictly adhering to the ethical Ideal, and modern totalitarianism: the terrorism of the Jacobins in the French Revolution was grounded in their strict adherence to the ideal of égaliberté - in their attempt to realize this ideal directly, to impose it on to reality; this coincidence of the purest idealism with the most destructive violence, analysed already by Hegel in the famous chapter of his Phenomenology, cannot explain twentieth-century totalitarianism. What the Jacobins lacked was the refcrence to objective/neutral 'scientific' knowledge of history legitimizing their exercise of unconditional power. It is only the Leninist revolutionary, not the Jacobin, who thus occupies the properly perverted position of the pure instrument of historical Necessity made accessible by means of scientific knowledge. 24 we Here Rancière follows Claude Lefort's insight into how the space for (Communist) totalitarianism was opened by 'democratic invention' itself: totalitarianism is an inherent perversion of democratic

logic.25 First, have the logic of the traditional Master who grounds his authority in some transcendent reason (Divine Right, etc.); what then becomes visible with 'democratic invention' is the gap that separates the positive person of the Master from the place he occupies in the symbolic network - with 'democratic invention', the place of Power is posited as originally empty, occupied only temporarily and in a contingent way by different subjects. In other words, it now becomes evident that (to quote Marx) people not treat somebody as a king because he is a king in himself; he is a king because and as long as people treat him as one. Totalitarianism takes into do account this rupture accomplished by the 'democratic invention': the POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 193 totalitarian Master fully accepts the logic of 'I am a Master only in so far as you treat me as one' - that is to say, his position involves no reference to some transcendent ground; on the contrary, he emphatically tells his followers: 'In myself, I am nothing; all my strength derives from you; I am only the embodiment of your deepest strivings; the moment I lose my roots in you, I am lost...'. His entire legitimacy derives from this position of pure servant of the People: the more he 'modestly' diminishes and instrumentalizes his role, the more he emphasizes that he merely expresses and realizes the strivings of the People themselves, who are the true Master, the more all-powerful and untouchable he becomes, since any attack on him is effectively an attack on the People themselves, on their innermost longings.... 'The People' is thus split into actual individuals (prone to treason and all kinds of human weaknesses) and the People embodied in the Master. These three logics (that of the traditional Master, of the democratic regulated fight for the empty place of Power, of the totalitarian Master) fit the three modes of the disavowal of politics conceptualized by Rancière: the traditional Master functions within the space of arche-politics; democracy involves para-politics, that is, the gentrification of politics proper in regulated agonism (the rules of elections and representative democracy, etc.); the totalitarian Master is possible only within the space of meta-politics. Perhaps the distinction between the Communist and Fascist Master resides in the fact that - despite all the talk about racial science, and so on - the innermost logic of Fascism is not meta-political but ultra-political: the Fascist Master is a warrior in politics. Stalinism at its 'purest' (the period of great purges in the late 1930s) is a much more paradoxical phenomenon than the Trotskyite narratives of the alleged betrayal of the authentic revolution by the new nomenklatura would like to have us believe: Stalinism, rather, is the point of radical (self-relating) negativity that functions as a kind of 'vanishing mediator' between the 'authentic' revolutionary phase of the late 1910s/early 1920s and the stabilization of the nomenklatura into a New Class after Stalin's death. That is to say: what characterizes this Stalinist moment, this effective 'point of (revolutionary) madness', is the inherent tension between the new nomenklatura and the Leader who is driven to repeated 'irrational' purges, so that the nomenklatura is unable to stabilize itself into a New Class: the self-enhancing ('bootstrap') cycle of Terror potentially involves everyone, not only the entire 'ordinary' population but also the highest nomenklatura - everyone (with the exception of the One,

Stalin himself) was under permanent threat of liquidation. 194 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT One is thus led to believe that Stalin in fact lost his fight against the nomenklatura (and thereby the bulk of his 'real' power) in the late 1930s, with the end of the Great Purges (ironically, this moment coincided with the ridiculous increase in public adulation of the figure of Stalin, his celebration as the greatest genius of mankind, and so on, as if the loss of 'real' power was somehow compensated by the gain in symbolic power. What the nomenklatura offered Stalin was a role comparable to that of the constitutional monarch who dots the i's, but is deprived of actual executive power (or, at least, has to share it with his equals, members of the senior inner circle); Stalin, of course, could not resign himself to such a symbolic role, and his post-World-War-II activity (the Jewish Doctors' Plot, the planned anti-Semitic purge, etc.) betrays his effort to regain real power, an effort which ultimately remained unsuccessful. So, in the last years of his life, with the resistance of the nomenklatura growing, Stalin was more and more isolated as a paranoiac madman whose words no longer possessed direct performative efficiency - his words (say, his accusations of treason against the senior members of the nomenklatura) were no longer 'acted upon'. In the last Communist Party congress attended by Stalin (in 1952), Stalin, in his speech, accused Molotov and Kaganovich of being traitors and English spies; after Stalin's speech, Molotov simply stood up and claimed that Comrade Stalin was wrong, since he and Kaganovich always had been and remained good Bolsheviks and, to the amazement of the party delegates present, nothing happened: the two accused men retained their senior posts - something that would have been unthinkable a couple of years before. to Also with regard to actual social change, or 'cut in the substance of the social body', the true revolution was not the October Revolution, but the collectivization of the late 1920s. The October Revolution left the substance of the social body (the intricate network of family and other relations) intact; in this respect it was similar to the Fascist revolution, which also mercly imposed a new form of executive power on to the existing network of social relations - or rather, precisely in order maintain this network of social relations. For that reason, the Fascist revolution was a fake event, a revolution - the semblance of a radical change - which took place so that 'nothing would really change', so that things (i.e. the fundamental capitalist relations of production) would basically remain the same. It was only the forced collectivization of the late 1920s which thoroughly subverted and dismembered the 'social substance' (the inherited network of relations), perturbing and cutting deeply into the most fundamental social fabric.26 POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 195 Let us return, however, to Rancière's basic emphasis on the radical ambiguity of the Marxist notion of the 'gap' between formal democracy (human rights, political freedom, etc.) and the economic reality of exploitation and domination. One can read this gap between the 'appearance' of equality-freedom and the social reality of economic, cultural, and other differences either in the standard 'symptomatic' way (the form of universal rights, equality, freedom and democracy is simply a necessary but illusory form of expression of its concrete social content,

the universe of exploitation and class domination), or in the much more subversive sense of a tension in which the 'appearance' of égaliberté, precisely, is not a 'mere appearance' but evinces an effectivity of its own, which allows it to set in motion the process of the rearticulation of actual socio-economic relations by way of their progressive 'politicization'. (Why shouldn't women vote too? Why shouldn't working conditions be of public political concern?, etc.) One is tempted here to use the old Lévi-Straussian term 'symbolic efficiency': the appearance of égaliberté is a symbolic fiction which, as such, possesses an actual efficiency of its own - one should resist the properly cynical temptation of reducing it to a mere illusion that conceals a different actuality. The distinction between appearance and the postmodern notion of simulacrum as no longer clearly distinguishable from the Real is crucial here.27 The political as the domain of appearance (opposed to the social reality of class and other distinctions, that is, of society as the articulated social body) has nothing in common with the postmodern notion that we are entering the era of universalized simulacra in which reality itself becomes indistinguishable from its simulated double. The nostalgic longing for the authentic experience of being lost in the deluge of simulacra (detectable in Virilio), as well as the postmodern assertion of the Brave New World of universalized simulacra as the sign that we are finally getting rid of the metaphysical obsession with authentic Being (detectable in Vattimo), both miss the distinction between simulacrum and appearance: what gets lost in today's 'plague of simulations' is not the firm, true, non-simulated Real, but appearance itself. To put it in Lacanian terms: simulacrum is imaginary (illusion), while appearance is symbolic (fiction); when the specific dimension of symbolic appearance starts to disintegrate, the Imaginary and the Real become more and more indistinguishable. The key to today's universe of simulacra, in which the Real is less and less distinguishable from its imaginary simulation, lies in the retreat of 'symbolic efficiency'. In sociopolitical terms, this domain of appearance (of symbolic fiction) is none other than that of politics as distinct from 196 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT the social body subdivided into parts. There is 'appearance' in so far as a part not included in the Whole of the Social Body (or included/excluded in a way against which it protests) symbolizes its position as that of a Wrong, claiming, against other parts, that it stands for the universality of égaliberté. here we are dealing with appearance in contrast to the 'reality' of the structured social body. The old conservative motto of 'keeping up appearances' thus takes a new twist today: it no longer stands for the 'wisdom' according to which it is better not to disturb the rules of social etiquette too much, since social chaos might ensue. Today, the effort to 'keep up appearances' stands, rather, for the effort to maintain the properly political space against the onslaught of the postmodern allembracing social body, with its multitude of particular identities.28 This is also how one has to read Hegel's famous dictum from his Phenomenology: 'the Suprasensible is appearance qua appearance'. In a sentimental answer to a child asking him what God's face is like, a priest answers that whenever the child encounters a human face irradiating benevolence and goodness, whoever this face belongs to, he catches a

glimpse of His face.... The truth of this sentimental platitude is that the Suprasensible (God's face) is discernible as a momentary, fleeting appearance, the 'grimace' of an earthly face. It is this dimension of 'appearance' transubstantiating a piece of reality into something which, for a brief moment, irradiates the suprasensible Eternity that is missing in the logic of the simulacrum: in the simulacrum, which becomes indistinguishable from the Real, everything is here, and no other, transcendent dimension effectively 'appears' in/through it. Here we are back at the Kantian problematic of the sublime: in Kant's famous reading of the enthusiasm evoked by the French Revolution in the enlightened public around Europe, the revolutionary events functioned as a sign through which the dimension of trans-phenomenal Freedom, of a free society, appeared. 'Appearance' is thus not simply the domain of phenomena, but those 'magic moments' in which another, noumenal dimension momentarily 'appears' in ('shines through') some empirical/contingent phenomenon. guise POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES of an appearance of Another Dimension which interrupts standard normal order of appearances qua phenomena. 197 the That is also the problem with cyberspace and virtual reality (VR): what VR threatens is not 'reality', which is dissolved in the multiplicity of its simulacra, but, on the contrary, appearance. So in order to counter the standard fear that cyberspace VR undermines reality, it is not enough to insist on the distinction between reality and the Real (claiming that VR can generate a 'sense of reality', but not the impossible Real); one should also introduce a distinction, correlative to the one between reality and the Real, within the order of appearance itself the distinction between phenomenal reality and the 'magic' appearances (of Another Dimension) within it. In short, one should distinguish here between two couples of opposites which are absolutely not to be confused in the single opposition of appearance versus reality: the couple of reality and its simulacrum, and the couple of the Real and appearance. The Real is a grimace of reality: say, a disgustingly contorted face in which the Real of a deadly rage transpires/appears. In this sense, the Real itself is an appearance, an elusive semblance whose fleeting presence/absence is discernible in the gaps and discontinuities of the phenomenal order of reality. The truc opposition is thus between reality/simulacrum (the two coincide in VR) and Real/appearance. In more detail, one should distinguish four levels of appearance: appearance in the simple sense of 'illusion', the false/distorted representation/image of reality ('things are not what they seem' platitudes) - although, of course, a further distinction needs to be introduced here between appearance qua mere subjective illusion (distorting the transcendentally constituted order of reality) and appearance qua the transcendentally constituted order of phenomenal reality itself, which is opposed to the Thing-in-itself; appearance in the sense of symbolic fiction, that is, in Hegclese, appearance as essential: say, the order of symbolic customs and titles ('the honourable judge', etc.) which is 'merely an appearance' - if we disturb it, however, social reality itself disintegrates; So - back to Hegel: 'the Suprasensible is appearance qua appearance does not simply mean that the Suprasensible is not a

positive entity beyond phenomena, but the inherent power of negativity which makes appearance 'merely an appearance', that is, something that is not in itself fully actual, but condemned to perish in the process of self-sublation. It also means that the Suprasensible is effective only as redoubled, self-reflected, self-related appearance: the Suprasensible comes into existence in the appearance in the sense of signs indicating that there is something beyond (directly accessible phenomenal reality), that is, the appearance of the Suprasensible: the Suprasensible exists only in so far as it appears as such (as the indeterminate presentiment that 'there is something beneath phenomenal reality'); 198 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT finally (and it is only here that we encounter what psychoanalysis calls the 'fundamental fantasy', as well as the most radical phenomenological notion of 'phenomena'), the appearance which fills the void in the midst of reality, that is, the appearance which conceals the fact that, beneath the phenomena, there is nothing to conceal. The problem with Kant is that he tends to confuse the last two levels. That is to say, the paradox to be accepted is that the realm of noumenal Freedom, of the Supreme Good, appears as such (as noumenal) only from the phenomenal perspective of the finite subject: in itself, if we get too close to it, it changes into the monstrous Real.... Here Heidegger was on the right track with his insistence on temporality as the ultimate unsurpassable horizon, that is, of eternity itself as a category which has meaning only within the temporal experience of a finite subject: in exactly the same way, what Kant was not fully aware of is how the distinction between (our experience of) noumenal freedom and temporal immersion in phenomena is a distinction internal to our finite temporal experience. Post-Politics Today, however, we are dealing with another form of the denegation of the political, postmodern post-politics, which no longer merely 'represses the political, trying to contain it and pacify the 'returns of the repressed', but much more effectively 'forecloses' it, so that the postmodern forms of ethnic violence, with their 'irrational' excessive character, are no longer simple 'returns of the repressed' but, rather, represent a case of the foreclosed (from the Symbolic) which, as we know from Lacan, returns in the Real. In post-politics, the conflict of global ideological visions embodied in different parties which compete for power is replaced by the collaboration of enlightened technocrats (economists, public opinion specialists...) and liberal multiculturalists; via the process of negotiation of interests, a compromise is reached in the guise of a more or less universal consensus. Post-politics thus emphasizes the need to leave old ideological divisions behind and confront new issues, armed with the necessary expert knowledge and free deliberation that takes people's concrete needs and demands into account. The best formula that expresses the paradox of post-politics is perhaps Tony Blair's characterization of New Labour as the 'Radical Centre': in POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 199 the old days of 'ideological' political division, the qualification 'radical' was reserved either for the extreme Left or for the extreme Right. The Centre was, by definition, moderate: measured by the old standards, the term 'Radical Centre' is the same nonsense as 'radical moderation'. What makes New Labour (or Bill Clinton's politics in the USA)

'radical' is its radical abandonment of the 'old ideological divides', usually formulated in the guise of a paraphrase of Deng Xiaoping's motto from the 1960s: 'It doesn't matter if a cat is red or white; what matters is that it actually catches mice': in the same vein, advocates of New Labour like to empha size that one should take good ideas without any prejudice and apply them, whatever their (ideological) origins. And what are these 'good ideas'? The answer is, of course, ideas that work. It is here that we encounter the gap that separates a political act proper from the 'administration of social matters' which remains within the framework of existing sociopolitical relations: the political act (intervention) proper is not simply something that works well within the framework of the existing relations, but something that changes the very framework that determines how things work. To say that good ideas are 'ideas that work' means that one accepts in advance the (global capitalist) constellation that determines what works (if, for example, one spends too much money on education or healthcare, that 'doesn't work', since it infringes too much on the conditions of capitalist profitability). One can also put it in terms of the well-known definition of politics as the 'art of the possible': authentic politics is, rather, the exact opposite, that is, the art of the impossible - it changes the very parameters of what is considered 'possible in the existing constellation.29 When this dimension of the impossible is effectively precluded, the political (the space of litigation in which the excluded can protest the wrong/injustice done to them) foreclosed from the symbolic returns in the Real, in the guise of new forms of racism; this 'postmodern racism' emerges as the ultimate consequence of the post-political suspension of the political, the reduction of the State to a mere police-agent servicing the (consensually established) needs of market forces and multiculturalist tolerant humanitarianism: the 'foreigner' whose status is never properly 'regulated' is the indivisible remainder of the transformation of the democratic political struggle into the post-political procedure of negotiation and multiculturalist policing. Instead of the political subject 'working class' demanding its universal rights, we get, on the one hand, the multiplicity of particular social strata or groups, each with its problems (the dwindling need for manual workers, etc.) and, on the other, the 200 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT immigrant, ever more prevented from politicizing his predicament of exclusion.30 The obvious counter-argument here is that today it is the (political) Right that is accomplishing the acts, boldly changing the very rules of what is considered acceptable-admissible in the sphere of public discourse: from the way Reaganism and Thatcherism legitimized the debate about curtailing workers' rights and social benefits, up to the gradual legitimization of the 'open debate' about Nazism in revisionist historiography à la Nolte (was it really so bad? Was not Communism worse, that is, cannot Nazism be understood as a reaction to Leninism-Stalinism?). Here, however, it is crucial to introduce a further distinction: for Lacan, a true act does not only retroactively change the rules of the symbolic space; it also disturbs the underlying fantasy - and here, concerning this crucial dimension, Fascism emphatically does not pass the criterion of the act. Fascist 'Revolution' is, on the contrary, the paradigmatic case of a pseudoEvent, of a spectacular turmoil destined

to conceal the fact that, on the most fundamental level (that of the relations of production), nothing really changes. The Fascist Revolution is thus the answer to the question: what do we have to change so that, ultimately, nothing will really change? Or - to put it in terms of the libidinal economy of the ideological space - far from disturbing/'traversing' the fantasy that underlies and sustains the capitalist social edifice, Fascist ideological revolution merely brings to the light the phantasmic 'inherent transgression' of the 'normal' bourgeois ideological situation (the set of implicit racist, sexist, etc., 'prejudices' that effectively determine the activity of individuals in it, although they are not publicly recognized). on One of today's common wisdoms is that we are entering a new medieval society in the guise of the New World Order - the grain of truth in this comparison is that the New World Order, as in medieval times, is global, but not universal, since it strives for a new global order with each part in its allocated place. A typical advocate of liberalism today throws together workers' protests against reducing their rights and right-wing insistence fidelity to the Western cultural heritage: he perceives both as pitiful remainders of the 'age of ideology' which have no relevance in today's post-ideological universe. However, the two resistances to globalization follow totally incompatible logics: the Right insists on a particular communal identity (ethnos or habitat) threatened by the onslaught of globalization; while for the Left, the dimension under threat is that of politicization, of articulating 'impossible' universal demands ('impossible from within the existing space of World Order). POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 201 Here one should oppose globalization and universalization: globalization (not only in the sense of global capitalism, the establishment of a global world market, but also in the sense of the assertion of 'humanity' as the global point of reference for human rights, legitimizing the violation of State sovereignty, from trade restrictions to direct military interventions, in parts of the world where global human rights are violated) is precisely the name for the emerging post-political logic which progressively precludes the dimension of universality that appears in politicization proper. The paradox is that there is no Universal proper without the process of political litigation, of the 'part of no part', of an out-of-joint entity presenting/manifesting itself as the stand-in for the Universal. One should link Rancière's notion of post-politics to the notion of excessive, non-functional cruelty as a feature of contemporary life, proposed by Balibar:31 a cruelty whose manifestations range from 'fundamentalist' racist and/or religious slaughter to the 'senseless' outbursts of violence by adolescents and the homeless in our megalopolises, a violence one is tempted to call Id-Evil, a violence grounded in no utilitarian or ideological reason. All the talk about foreigners stealing work from us, or the threat they represent to our Western values, should not deceive us: under closer examination, it soon becomes clear that this talk provides a rather superficial secondary rationalization. The answer we ultimately obtain from a skinhead is that it makes him feel good to beat up forcigners, that their presence disturbs him.... What we encounter here is indeed Id-Evil, that is, Evil structured and motivated by the most elementary imbalance in the relationship

between the Ego and jouissance, by the tension between pleasure and the foreign body of jouissance at the very heart of it. Id-Evil thus stages the most elementary 'short circuit' in the subject's relationship to the primordially missing object-cause of his desire: what 'bothers' us in the 'other' (Jew, Japanese, African, Turk...) is that he appears to enjoy a privileged relationship to the object – the other either possesses the object-treasure, having snatched it away from us (which is why we don't have it), or he poses a threat to our possession of the object. 32 What one should suggest here, again, is the Hegelian 'infinite judgement' asserting the speculative identity of these 'useless' and 'excessive outbursts of violence, which display nothing butapure and naked ('nonsublimated') hatred of Otherness, and the post-political multiculturalist universe of tolerance of difference, in which nobody is excluded. course, I have just used the term 'non-sublimated' in its usual sense which, in this case, stands for the exact opposite of its strict psychoanalytic Of 202 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT meaning - in short, what takes place in the focusing of our hatred on some representative of the (officially tolerated) Other is the very mechanism of sublimation at its most elementary: the all-encompassing nature of the post-political Concrete Universality which accounts for everybody at the level of symbolic inclusion, this multiculturalist vision-and-practice of 'unity in difference' ('all equal, all different'), leaves open, as the only way to mark the Difference, the proto-sublimatory gesture of elevating a contingent Other (of race, sex, religion...) into the 'absolute Otherness' of the impossible Thing, the ultimate threat to our identity - this Thing which must be annihilated if we are to survive. Therein lies the properly Hegelian paradox: the final arrival of the truly rational 'concrete universality' the abolition of antagonisms, the 'mature' universe of the negotiated coexistence of different groups - coincides with its radical opposite, with thoroughly contingent outbursts of violence. Hegel's fundamental rule is that 'objective' excess (the direct reign of abstract universality which imposes its law 'mechanically', with complete disregard for the concerned subject caught in its web) is always supplemented by the 'subjective' excess (the irregular, arbitrary exercise of whims). An excellent illustration of this interdependence is provided by Balibar, 33 who distinguishes two opposite but complementary modes of excessive violence: the 'ultra-objective' ('structural') violence that is inherent in the social conditions of global capitalism (the 'automatic' creation of excluded and dispensable individuals, from the homeless to the unemployed), and the 'ultra-subjective' violence of newly emerging ethnic and/ or religious (in short: racist) 'fundamentalisms'. This 'excessive' and 'groundless' violence involves its own mode of knowledge, that of impotent cynical reflection - back to our example of Id-Evil, of a skinhead beating up foreigners: when he is really pressed for the reasons for his violence, and if he is capable of minimal theoretical reflection, he will suddenly start to talk like social workers, sociologists and social psychologists, quoting diminished social mobility, rising insecurity, the disintegration of paternal authority, the lack of maternal love in his early childhood ... in short, he will provide the more or less precise psychosociological account of his acts so dear to enlightened libcrals

eager to 'understand' violent youth as tragic victims of their social and familial conditions. Here the standard enlightened formula of the efficiency of the 'critique of ideology' from Plato onwards ('They're doing it because they don't know what they're doing' - that is, knowledge in itself is liberating; when the erring subject reflects upon what he is doing, he will no longer be doing it) is turned around: the violent skinhead 'knows very well what POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 203 he's doing, but he's nevertheless doing it'.84 The symbolically efficient knowledge embedded in the subject's actual social praxis disintegrates into, on the one hand, excessive 'irrational' violence with no ideologicopolitical foundation and, on the other, impotent external reflection that leaves the subject's acts intact. In the guise of this cynically impotent reflecting skinhead who, with an ironic smile, explains the roots of his senselessly violent behaviour to the perplexed journalist, the enlightened tolerant multiculturalist bent on 'understanding' forms of excessive violence gets his own message in its inverted, true form - in short, as Lacan would have put it, at this point the communication between him and the 'object' of his study, the intolerant skinhead, is thoroughly successful. The distinction between this excessive 'dysfunctional' violence and the obscene violence that serves as the implicit support of a standard ideological universal notion is crucial here (when 'the rights of man' are 'not really universal' but 'in fact the right of white property-owning males', any attempt to disregard this implicit underlying set of unwritten rules that effectively constrain the universality of rights is met by outbursts of violence). Nowhere is this contrast stronger than in the case of the African-Americans: although they were formally entitled to participate in political life by the mere fact of bcing Amcrican citizens, the old parapolitical democratic racism prevented their actual participation by silently enforcing their exclusion (via verbal and physical threats, etc.). The appropriate answer to this standard exclusion-from-the-Universal was the great Civil Rights movement associated with the name of Martin Luther King: it suspended the implicit obscene supplement that enacted the actual exclusion of Blacks from formal universal equality - of course, it was easy for such a gesture to gain the support of the large majority of the white liberal upper-class establishment, dismissing opponents as dumb low-class Southern rednecks. Today, however, the very terrain of the struggle has changed: the post-political liberal establishment not only fully acknowledges the gap between mere formal equality and its actualization/ implementation, it not only acknowledges the exclusionary logic of 'false ideological universality; it even actively fights it by applying to it a vast legal-psychological-sociological network of measures, from identifying the specific problems of every group and subgroup (not only homosexuals but African-American lesbians, African-American lesbian mothers, AfricanAmerican unemployed lesbian mothers...) up to proposing a set of measures ('affirmative action', etc.) to rectify the wrong. What such a tolerant procedure precludes is the gesture of politicization proper: although the difficulties of being an African-American unemployed 204 THE TICKLISH SUBJECт lesbian mother are adequately catalogued right

down to its most specific features, the concerned subject none the less somehow 'feels' that there is something 'wrong' and 'frustrating' in this very effort to mete outjustice to her specific predicament - what she is deprived of is the possibility of 'metaphoric' elevation of her specific 'wrong' into a stand-in for the universal 'wrong'. The only way to articulate this universality - the fact that I, precisely, am not merely that specific individual exposed to a set of specific injustices - consists, then, in its apparent opposite, in the thoroughly 'irrational' excessive outburst of violence. The old Hegelian rule is again confirmed here: the only way for a universality to come into existence, to 'posit' itself 'as such', is in the guise of its very opposite, of what cannot but appear as an excessive 'irrational' whim. These violent passages à l'acte bear witness to some underlying antagonism that can no longer be formulated-symbolized in properly political terms. The only way to counteract these excessive 'irrational' outbursts is to approach the question of what none the less remains foreclosed in the very all-inclusionary/tolerant post-political logic, and to actualize this foreclosed dimension in some new mode of political subjectivization. Let us recall the standard example of a popular protest (mass demonstration, strike, boycott) directed ata specific point, that is, focusing on a particular demand ('Abolish that new tax! Justice for the imprisoned! Stop exploiting that natural resource!"...) - the situation becomes politicized when this particular demand starts to function as a metaphoric condensation of the global opposition against Them, those in power, so that the protest is no longer actually just about that demand, but about the universal dimension that resonates in that particular demand (for this reason, protesters often feel somehow deceived when those in power against whom their protest was addressed simply accept their demand - as if, in this way, they have somehow frustrated them, depriving them of the true aim of their protest in the very guise of accepting their demand). What post-politics tends to prevent is precisely this metaphoric universalization of particular demands: post-politics mobilizes the vast apparatus of experts, social workers, and so on, to reduce the overall demand (complaint) of a particular group to just this demand, with its particular content - no wonder this suffocating closure gives birth to 'irrational' outbursts of violence as the only way to give expression to the dimension beyond particularity. a This argumentation is not to be confused with the point, made by many conservative critic, according to which violent outbursts signify return of the repressed of our anaemic liberal Western civilization. the POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 205 Exemplary here is Mario Vargas Llosa's argumentation that 'the hooligan is no barbarian: he is an exquisite and terrible product of civilization'.35 Llosa takes as his starting point the observation that the typical violent soccer fan is not an unemployed lumpenproletarian but a comfortably off middle-class worker, that is, the very epitome of gentle good manners and civilized compassion - his violent outbursts are 'returns of the repressed', the reassertion of the violent orgy increasingly prohibited by our civilized liberal societies. Through a misleading reference to Freud, Llosa mystifies and naturalizes current violent outbursts: as if there is a fixed, irreducible propensity

towards violent outbursts in human nature, and when sacred orgies are no longer permitted as its legitimate expression, this propensity has to find another way to express itself.... In clear contrast to this line of argumentation, my point is much stronger: the neo-Nazi skinhead's ethnic violence is not the 'return of the repressed' of the liberal multiculturalist tolerance, but directly generated by it, its own concealed true face. Is There a Progressive Eurocentrism? This conceptual frame enables us to approach Eastern European Socialism in a new way. The passage from actually existing Socialism to actually existing capitalism in Eastern Europe brought about a series of comic reversals of sublime democratic enthusiasm into the ridiculous. The dignified East German crowds gathering around Protestant churches and heroically defying Stasi terror suddenly turned into vulgar consumers of bananas and cheap pornography; the civilized Czechs mobilized by the appeal of Havel and other cultural icons suddenly turned into cheap swindlers of Western tourists.... The disappointment was mutual: the West, which began by idolizing the Eastern dissident movement as the reinvention of its own tired democracy, disappointedly dismisses the present post-Socialist regimes as a mixture of the corrupt ex-Communist oligarchy and/or ethnic and religious fundamentalists (even the dwindling liberals are mistrusted as insufficiently 'politically correct': where is their feminist awareness? etc.); the East, which began by idolizing the West as the example of affluent democracy to be followed, finds itself in the whirlpool of ruthless commercialization and economic colonization. So was all this worth the effort? The hero of Dashiell Hammett's Maltese Falcon, the private detective Sam Spade, narrates the story of his being hired to find a man who had suddenly left his settled job and family, and vanished. Spade is unable to 206 to THE TICKLISH SUBJECT the track him down, but a few years later he accidentally encounters the man in a bar in another city. Under an assumed name, the man is leading a life remarkably similar to the one he fled from (a regular boring job, a new wife and children) - despite this similarity, however, he is convinced that his new beginning was not in vain, that it was well worth the trouble cut his ties and start a new life.... Perhaps the same goes for passage from actually existing Socialism to acutally existing capitalism in ex-Communist East European countries: despite betrayed enthusiastic expectations, something did take place in between, in the passage itself, it is in this Event which took place in between, this 'vanishing mediator', in this moment of democratic enthusiasm, that we should locate the crucial dimension obfuscated by later renormalization. and is It is clear that the protesting crowds in the DDR, Poland and the Czech Republic 'wanted something else', a utopian object of impossible Fullness designated by a multiplicity of names ('solidarity', 'human rights', etc.), not what they actually got. There are two possible reactions to this gap between expectations and reality; the best way to capture them is by reference to the well-known opposition between fool and knave. The fool simpleton, a court jester who is allowed to tell the truth precisely because the 'performative power' (the sociopolitical efficacy) of his speech is suspended; the knave is the cynic who openly states the truth, a crook who tries to sell the open admission

of his crookedness as honesty, scoundrel who admits the need for illegitimate repression in order to maintain social stability. Following the fall of Socialism, the knave is a neoconservative advocate of the free market, who cruclly rejects all forms of social solidarity as counterproductive sentimentalism; while the fool is a multiculturalist 'radical' social critic who, by means of his ludic procedures destined to 'subvert' the existing order, actually serves as its supplement. With regard to Eastern Europe, a knave dismisses the 'third way' project Neues Forum in the ex-DDR as hopelessly outdated utopianism, and exhorts us to accept cruel market reality; while a fool insists that the collapse of Socialism has actually opened up a Third Way, a possibility left unexploited by the Western recolonization of the a of East. This cruel reversal of the sublime into the ridiculous was, of course, grounded in the fact that there was a double misunderstanding at work in the public (self-) perception of social protest movements (from Solidarity 1o Neues Forum) in the last years of Eastern European Socialism. On the one hand, there were the attempts of the ruling nomenklatura to reinscribe these events in their police/political framework, by distinguishing between 'honest critics' with whom one could discuss matters in a calm, of POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 207 to rational, depoliticized atmosphere, and a bunch of extremist provocateurs who served foreign interests. 6 The battle was thus not only for higher wages and better conditions, but also - and above all - for the workers be acknowledged as legitimate partners in negotiating with representatives the regime - the moment the powers that be were forced to accept this, the battle was in a way already won.37 When these movements exploded in a broad mass phenomenon, their demands for freedom and democracy (and solidarity and...) were also misperceived by Western commentators who saw in them confirmation that the people of the East also want what the people in the West already have: they automatically translated these demands into the Western liberal-democratic notion frecdom (multiparty representational political game cum global market economy). of Emblematic to the point of caricature here was the figure of Dan Rather, the American news reporter, on Tiananmen Square in 1989, standing in front of a copy of the Statue of Liberty and claiming that this statue says everything about what the protesting students were demanding (in short, if you scratch the yellow skin of a Chinese, you find an American). What this statue actually stood for was a utopian longing that had nothing to do with the real USA (incidentally, it was the same with the original immigrants to America, for whom the view of the statue stood for a utopian longing that was soon crushed). The perception of the American media thus offered another example of the reinscription of the explosion of what, as we have seen, Étienne Balibar calls égaliberté (the unconditional demand for freedom-equality which explodes any positive order) within the confines of a given order. Are we, then, condemned to the debilitating alternative of choosing between a knave and a fool, or is there a tertium datur? Perhaps the contours of this tertium datur can be discerned via reference to the fundamental European legacy. When one says 'European legacy', every self-respecting leftist intellectual has the

same reaction as Joseph Goebbels had to culture as such: he reaches for his gun and starts to fire accusations of proto-Fascist Eurocentrist cultural imperialism.... Is it possible, however, to imagine a leftist appropriation of the European political tradition? Yes, if we follow Rancière and identify as the core of this tradition the unique gesture of democratic political subjectivization: it was this politicization proper which re-emerged violently in the disintegration of Eastern European Socialism. From my own political past, I remember how, after four journalists were arrested and brought to trial by the Yugoslav Army in Slovenia in 1988, I participated in the 'Committee for the protection 208 THE TICKLISH SUBJECт of the human rights of the four accused'. Officially, the goal of the Committee was simply to guarantee fair treatment for the four accused; however, the Committee turned into the major oppositional political force, practically the Slovene version of the Czech Civic Forum or East German Neues Forum, the body which co-ordinated democratic opposition, a de facto representative of civil society. The Committee's programme consisted of four items; the first three directly concerned the accused, while the 'devil in the detail', of course, was the fourth item, which said that the Committee wanted to clarify the entire background of the arrest of the four accused, and thus contribute to creating circumstances in which such arrests would no longer be possible - a coded way of saying that we wanted the abolition of the existing Socialist regime. Our demand 'Justice for the four accused!" started to function as the metaphoric condensation of the demand for the global overthrow of the Socialist regime. For that reason, in almost daily negotiations with the Committee, Communist Party officials were always accusing us of a 'hidden agenda', claiming that the liberation of the four accused was not our true goal - that we were 'exploiting and manipulating the arrest and trial for other, darker political goals'. In short, the Communists wanted to play the 'rational' depoliticized game: they wanted to deprive the slogan 'Justice for the four accused!' of its explosive general connotation, and reduce it to its literal meaning, which concerned just a minor legal matter; they cynically claimed that it was we, the Committee, who were behaving 'non-democratically' and manipulating the fate of the accused, using global pressure and blackmailing strategies instead of focusing on the particular problem of their plight. this This is politics proper: the moment in which a particular demand is not simply part of the negotiation of interests but aims at something more, and starts to function as the metaphoric condensation of the global restructuring of the entire social space. There is a clear contrast between subjectivization and today's proliferation of postmodern 'identity politics' whose goal is the exact opposite, that is, precisely the assertion of one's particular identity, of one's proper place within the social structure. The postmodern identity politics of particular (ethnic, sexual, etc.) lifestyles perfectly fits the depoliticized notion of society, in which every particular group is 'accounted for', has its specific status (of victim) acknowledged through affirmative action or other measures destined guarantee social justice. The fact that this kind of justice meted out victimized minorities requires an intricate police apparatus (for identifyto to POLITICAL

SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 209 ing the group in question, for punishing offenders against its rights - how legally to define sexual harassment or racial injury?, and so on - for providing the preferential treatment which should compensate for the wrong this group has suffered) is deeply significant: what is usually praised as 'postmodern politics' (the pursuit of particular issues whose resolution must be negotiated within the 'rational' global order allocating its particular component its proper place) is thus effectively the end of politics proper. to So while everyone seems to agree that today's post-political liberaldemocratic global capitalist regime is the regime of the non-event (in Nietzsche's terms, of the Last Man), the question of where we are to look for the Event remains open. The obvious solution is: in so far as we experience contemporary postmodern social life as 'non-substantial' the proper answer is the multitude of passionate, often violent returns 'roots', to different forms of ethnic and/or religious 'substance'. What is 'substance' in social experience? It is the violent emotional moment of 'recognition', when one becomes aware of one's 'roots', of one's 'true belonging', the moment in the face of which liberal reflexive distance is utterly impotent - all of a sudden, adrift in the world, one finds oneself in the grip of a kind of absolute longing for 'home', and everything else, everyday common concerns, becomes unimportant....38 Here, however, one must fully endorse Badiou's point that these 'returns to the Substance' are themselves impotent in the face of the global march of Capital: they are its inherent supplement, the limit/ condition of its functioning, since - as Deleuze emphasized years ago capitalist 'deterritorialization' is always accompanied by re-emerging 'reterritorializations'. More precisely, there is an inherent split in the field of particular identities themselves caused by the onslaught of capitalist globalization: on the one hand, the so-called 'fundamentalisms', whose basic formula is that of the Identity of one's own group, implying the practice of excluding the threatening Other(s): France for the French (against Algerian immigrants), America for Americans (against the Hispanic invasion), Slovenia for Slovenians (against the excessive presence of 'Southerners', immigrants from the ex-Yugoslav republics);39 on the other hand, there is postmodern multiculturalist 'identity politics', aiming at the tolerant coexistence of ever-shifting, 'hybrid' lifestyle groups, divided into endless subgroups (Hispanic women, black gays, white male AIDS patients, lesbian mothers...). This ever-growing flowering of groups and subgroups in their hybrid and fluid, shifting identities, each insisting on the right to assert its 210 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT specific way of life and/or culture, this incessant diversification, is possible and thinkable only against the background of capitalist globalization; it is the very way capitalist globalization affects our sense of ethnic and other forms of community belonging: the only link connecting these multiple groups is the link of Capital itself, always ready to satisfy the specific demands of each group and subgroup (gay tourism, Hispanic music...). Furthermore, the opposition between fundamentalism and postmodern pluralist identity politics is ultimately a fake, concealing a deeper solidarity (or, to put it in Hegelese, speculative identity): a multiculturalist

can easily find even the most 'fundamentalist' ethnic identity attractive, but only in so far as it is the identity of the supposedly authentic Other (say, in the USA, Native American tribal identity); a fundamentalist group can easily adopt, in its social functioning, the postmodern strategies of identity politics, presenting itself as one of the threatened minorities, simply striving to maintain its specific way of life and cultural identity. The line of separation between multiculturalist identity politics and fundamentalism is thus purely formal; it often depends merely on the different perspective from which the observer views a movement for maintaining a group identity. Under these conditions, the Event in the guise of the 'return to roots' can be only a semblance that fits the capitalist circular movenent perfectly or - in the worst case - leads to a catastrophe like Nazism. The sign of today's ideologico-political constellation is the fact that these kinds of pseudo-Events constitute the only appearances of Events which seem to pop up (it is only right-wing populism which today displays the authentic political passion of accepting the struggle, of openly admitting that, precisely in so far as one claims to speak from a universal standpoint, one does not aim to please everybody, but is ready to introduce a division of 'Us' versus 'Them'). It has often been remarked that, despite hating the guts of Buchanan in the USA, Le Pen in France or Haider in Austria, even Leftists feel a kind of relief at their appearance - finally, in the midst of the reign of the aseptic post-political administration of public affairs, there is someone who revives a proper political passion of division and confrontation, a committed belief in political issues, albeit in a deplorably repulsive form.... We are thus more and more deeply locked into a claustrophobic space within which we can only oscillate between the nonevent of the smooth running of the liberal-democratic capitalist global New World Order and fundamentalist Events (the rise of local protoFascisms, etc.), which temporarily disturb the calm surface of the capitalist ocean - no wonder that, in these circumstances, Heidegger mistook the POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 211 pseudo-Event of the Nazi revolution for the Event itself. Today, more than ever, one has to insist that the only way open to the emergence of Event is that of breaking the vicious cycle of globalization-with-particularization by (re) asserting the dimension of Universality against capitalist globalization. Badiou draws an interesting parallel here between our time American global domination and the late Roman Empire, also 'multiculturalist' global State in which multiple ethnic groups were thriving, united (not by capital, but) by the non-substantial link of the Roman legal order - so what we need today is the gesture that would undermine capitalist globalization from the standpoint of universal Truth, just Pauline Christianity did to the Roman global Empire. an of a as For this reason, a renewed Left should aim at fully endorsing Kierkegaard's paradoxical claim that, with regard to the tension between tradition and modernity, Christianity is on the side of modernity. In his assertion that authentic Faith can emerge only when one leaves pagan 'organicist humanism behind, Kierkegaard promulgates a thoroughgoing reversal in the relationship between Inside and Outside (inner faith and religious institution). In his passionate and violent polemics against 'Christendom',

he does not simply reject obedience to external institutionalized religion on behalf of a true inner faith: Kierkegaard is well aware that these two aspects (rituals of the external institution and a true inner conviction) are strictly codependent, that they form the two sides of the 'modern age' in which lifeless external ritual is supplemented by the empty sentimentalism of the liberal religion of inner conviction ('dogmas don't matter, what matters is the authentic inner religious sentiment'). Kierkegaard's point is that true religion is simultaneously more 'inner' (it involves an act of absolute faith that cannot even be externalized into the universal medium of language) and more external (when I truly believe, I accept that the source of my faith is not in myself; that, in some inexplicable way, it comes from outside, from God Himself - in His grace, God addressed me, it was not I who raised myself to Him). In other words, we no longer dwell in the Aristotelian universe in which (ontologically) lower elements spontaneously move and tend towards their Goal, the immovable Good: in Christianity, it is God Himself who 'moves', who embodies Himself in a temporal/mortal man. When Kierkegaard determines faith as the pure internality which the believer is unable to symbolize/socialize, to share with others (Abraham is absolutely alone in the face of God's horrible command to slaughter his son Isaac; he is unable even to share his pain with others); this means that what, in his faith, is absolutely inner, what resists intersubjective symbolic mediation, 212 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT is the very radical externality of the religious Call: Abraham is unable to share God's horrible injunction with others precisely in so far as this injunction in no way expresses his 'inner nature', but is experienced as a radically traumatic intrusion which attacks the subject from outside and which the subject can never internalize, assume as 'his own', discern any meaning in it to be shared with others. The point is thus that the subject cannot externalize God's injunction precisely because he cannot internalize it. We can see now how Kierkegaard 'surmounts' the 'modern age' opposition between external lifeless ritual and pure inner sentimental conviction: not through a pseudo-Hegelian synthesis, so that we re-establish an authentic social life in which 'external' social rituals are again permeated with authentic inner conviction - that is, in which subjects fully participate in organic social life (the young Hegel's vision of the Greek community prior to the split into 'subjective' and 'objective'), but by endorsing the paradox of authentic faith in which radical externality coincides with pure internality. Perhaps one should return here to the well-known Kierkegaardian opposition between Socratic reminiscence and Christian repetition. The Socratic philosophical principle is the one of reminiscence: the Truth already dwells deep inside me, and in order to discover it I have only to look deep into my soul, to get to 'know myself'. The Christian Truth, in contrast, is the one of Revelation, which is the exact opposite of reminiscence: Truth is not inherent, it is not the (re) discovery of what is already in myself, but an Event, something violently imposed on me from the Outside through a traumatic encounter that shatters the very foundations of my being. (For that reason, the New Age Gnostic redefinition of Christianity in terms of the Soul's journey of inner self-discovery and purification is profoundly

heretical, and should be ruthlessly rejected.) And Lacan, like Badiou, opts for the Christian-Kierkegaardian view: in contrast to misleading first impressions, psychoanalytic treatment is, at its most fundamental, not the path of remembrance, of the return to the inner repressed truth, its bringing to light; its crucial moment, that of 'traversing the fantasy', rather, designates the subject's (symbolic) rebirth, his (re-)creation ex nihilo, a jump through the 'zero-point' of death drive to the thoroughly new symbolic configuration of his being. POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES The Three Universals 213 These impasses demonstrate how the structure of the Universal is much more complex than it appears. It was Balibar[1] who elaborated the three levels of universality which vaguely follow the Lacanian triad of Real, Imaginary and Symbolic: the 'real' universality of globalization, with the supplementary process of 'internal exclusions' (the extent to which, today, the fate of each of us hinges on the intricate web of global market relations); the universality of the fiction that regulates ideological hegemony (Church or State as the universal 'imagined communities', which allow the subject to acquire a distance towards immersion in his immediate social group - class, profession, sex, religion ... - and posit himself as a free subject); the universality of an Ideal, as exemplified by the revolutionary demand for égaliberté, which remains an unconditional excess, setting in motion permanent insurrection against the existing order, and can thus never be 'gentrified', included in the existing order. The point, of course, is that the boundary between these three universals is never stable and fixed: the notion of freedom and equality can serve as the hegemonic idea which enables us to identify with our particular social role (I am a poor artisan, but precisely as such I participate in the life of my nation-state as an equal and free citizen...), or as the irreducible excess which destabilizes the fixed social order. What, in the Jacobin universe, was the destabilizing universality of the Ideal setting in motion the incessant process of social transformation later became the ideological fiction allowing each individual to identify with his specific place in the social space. The alternative here is: is the universal 'abstract' (potentially opposed to concrete content) or 'concrete' (in the sense that I experience my very particular mode of social life as my specific way of participating in the universal social order)? Balibar's point is, of course, that the tension between the two is irreducible: the excess of abstract-negative-ideal universality, its unsettlingdestabilizing force, can never be fully integrated into the harmonious whole of a 'concrete universality'.41 However, there is another tension, the tension between the two modes of 'concrete universality' itself, which seems more crucial today. That is to say, the 'real' universality of today's globalization through the market involves its own hegemonic fiction (or even ideal) of multiculturalist tolerance, respect for and protection of human rights and democracy, and so on; it involves its own pseudo-Hegelian 'concrete universality' of a 214 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT world order whose universal features of market, human rights and democracy allow each specific 'lifestyle' to flourish in its particularity. So a tension inevitably emerges between this postmodern, post-nation-state, 'concrete universality', and the earlier 'concrete

universality' of the nation-state. The story of the emergence of the nation-state is the story of the (often extremely violent) 'transubstantiation' of local communities and their traditions into the modern nation qua 'imagined community'; this process involved the repression of authentic local ways of life and/or their reinscription into the new encompassing 'invented tradition'. In other words, 'national tradition' is a screen that conceals not the process of modernization but the true ethnic tradition itself in its unbearable factuality.12 What comes after is the (apparently) opposite 'postmodern' process of returning to more local, subnational modes of identification; however, these new modes of identification are no longer experienced as directly substantial - they are already a matter of the free choice of one's 'lifestyle'. None the less, it is not enough to oppose the previous authentic ethnic identification to the postmodern arbitrary choice of 'lifestyles': this opposition fails to acknowledge the extent to which that very previous 'authentic' national identification was an 'artificial', violently imposed phenomenon, based on the repression of previous local traditions. Far from being a 'natural' unity of social life, a balanced frame, a kind of Aristotelian entelechia towards which all previous development advanced, the universal form of nation-state is, rather, a precarious, temporary balance between the relationship to a particular ethnic Thing (patriotism, pro patria mori, etc.) and the (potentially) universal function of the market. On the one hand, the nation-state 'sublates' organic local forms of identification into universal 'patriotic' identification; on the other, it posits itself as a kind of pseudo-natural boundary of the market economy, delimiting 'internal' from 'external' commerce - economic activity is thus 'sublimated', raised to the level of the ethnic Thing, legitimated as patriotic contribution to the nation's greatness. This balance is constantly threatened from both sides: from the side of previous 'organic' forms of particular identification which do not simply disappear but continue their subterrancan life outside the universal public sphere; and from the side of the immanent logic of Capital, whose 'transnational' nature is inherently indifferent to nation-state boundaries. And today's new 'fundamentalist' ethnic identifications involve a kind of 'desublimation', a process of disintegration of this precarious unity of the 'national economy' into its POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 215 two constituent parts, the transnational market function and the relationship to the ethnic Thing.43 It is therefore only today, in contemporary 'fundamentalist' ethnic, religious, lifestyle, and so on, communities, that the split between the abstract form of commerce and the relationship to the particular ethnic Thing, inaugurated by the Enlightenment project, is fully realized: today's postmodern ethnic or religious 'fundamentalism' and xenophobia are not only not 'regressive' but, on the contrary, offer the supreme proof of the final emancipation of the economic logic of the market from the attachment to the ethnic Thing. That is the highest speculative effort of the dialectic of social life: not in describing the mediation process of the primordial immediacy (say, the disintegration of organic community in 'alienated' individualist socicty), but in explaining how this very mediation process characteristic of modernity can give birth to new forms of

'organic' immediacy, like the contemporary 'chosen' or 'invented' communities ('lifestyle communities': gays, etc.).44 Multiculturalism How, then, does the universe of Capital relate to the form of nation-state in our era of global capitalism? Perhaps this relationship is best designated as 'autocolonization': with the direct multinational functioning of Capital, we are no longer dealing with the standard opposition between metropolis and colonized countries; a global company, as it were, cuts its umbilical cord with its mother-nation and treats its country of origin as simply another territory to be colonized. This is what is so disturbing to patriotically orientated right-wing populists, from Le Pen to Buchanan: the fact that the new multinationals have exactly the same attitude towards the French or American local population as towards the population of Mexico, Brazil or Taiwan. Is there not a kind of poetic justice in this selfreferential turn of today's global capitalism, which functions as a kind of 'negation of negation', after national capitalism and its internationalist/ colonialist phase? At the beginning (ideally, of course), there is capitalism within the confines of a nation-state, and with the accompanying international trade (exchange between sovereign nation-states); what follows is the relationship of colonization, in which the colonizing country subordinates and exploits (economically, politically, culturally) the colonized country; the final moment of this process is the paradox of colonization, in which there are only colonies, no colonizing countries - the colonizing 216 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT power is no longer a nation-state but the global company itself. In the long term, we shall all not only wear Banana Republic shirts but also live in banana republics. And, of course, the ideal form of ideology of this global capitalism is multiculturalism, the attitude which, from a kind of empty global position, treats each local culture as the colonizer treats colonized people - as 'natives' whose mores are to be carefully studied and 'respected'. That is to say: the relationship between traditional imperialist colonialism and global capitalist self-colonization is exactly the same as the relationship between Western cultural imperialism and multiculturalism - just as global capitalism involves the paradox of colonization without the colonizing nationstate metropolis, multiculturalism involves a patronizing Eurocentrist distance and/or respect for local cultures without roots in one's own particular culture. In other words, multiculturalism is a disavowed, inverted, self-referential form of racism, a 'racism with a distance'- it 'respects' the Other's identity, conceiving the Other as a self-enclosed 'authentic' community towards which the multiculturalist maintains a distance made possible by his/her privileged universal position. Multiculturalism is a racism which empties its own position of all positive content (the multiculturalist is not a direct racist; he or she does not oppose to the Other the particular values of his or her own culture); none the less he or she retains this position as the privileged empty point of universality from which one is able to appreciate (and depreciate) other particular cultures properly - multiculturalist respect for the Other's specificity is the very form of asserting one's own superiority. From the standpoint of the post-Marxist anti-essentialist notion of politics as the field of hegemonic struggle with no pre-established rules that would define its parameters in

advance, it is easy to reject the very notion of the 'logic of Capital' as precisely the remainder of the old essentialist stance: far from being reducible to an ideologico-cultural effect of the economic process, the passage from standard cultural imperialism to the more tolerant multiculturalism with its openness towards the wealth of hybrid ethnic, sexual, and so on, identities is the result of a long and difficult politico-cultural struggle whose final outcome was in no way guaranteed by the a priori co-ordinates of the 'logic of Capital'.... The crucial point, however, is that this struggle for the politicization and assertion of multiple ethnic, sexual, and other identities always took place against the background of an invisible yet all the more forbidding barrier: the global capitalist system was able to incorporate the gains of the postmodern politics of identities to the extent that they did not disturb POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 217 the smooth circulation of Capital - the moment some political intervenposes a serious threat to that, an elaborate set of exclusionary measures quashes it. tion What about the rather obvious counter-argument that the multiculturalist's neutrality is false, since his or her position silently privileges Eurocentrist content? This line of reasoning is right, but for the wrong reason. The particular cultural background or roots which always support the universal multiculturalist position are not its 'truth', hidden beneath the mask of universality ('multiculturalist universalism is really Eurocentrist...') but, rather, the opposite: the stain of particular roots is the phantasmic screen which conceals the fact that the subject is already thoroughly 'rootless', that his true position is the void of universality. Let me recall Darian Leader's example of the man in a restaurant with his female companion, who, when asking the waiter for a table, says: 'Bedroom for two, please!' instead of 'Table for two, please!'. One should reverse the standard Freudian explanation ('Of course, his mind was already on the night of sex he planned after the meal!'): this intervention of the subterranean sexual fantasy is, rather, the screen which serves as the defence against the oral drive which actually matters to him more than sex 45 In his analysis of the French Revolution of 1848 (in The Class Struggles in France), Marx provides a similar example of such a double deception: the Party of Order which took over after the Revolution publicly supported the Republic, yet secretly it believed in Restoration - members used every opportunity to mock Republican rituals and to signal in every possible way where 'their heart was'. The paradox, however, was that the truth of their activity lay in the external form they privately mocked and despised: this Republican form was not a mere semblance bencath which the Royalist desire lurked - rather, it was the secret clinging to Royalism which enabled them to fulfil their actual historical function: to implement bourgeois Republican law and order. Marx himself mentions how members of the Party of Order derived immense pleasure from their occasional Royalist 'slips of the tongue' against the Republic (referring to France a Kirgdom in their parliamentary debates, etc.): these slips of the tongue articulated their phantasmic illusions which served as the screen enabling them to blind themselves to the social reality of what was going on on the surface. as And, mutatis mutandis, the same goes for today's capitalist, who still clings to some

particular cultural heritage, identifying it as the secret source of his success (Japanese executives following tea ceremonies or 218 the THE TICKLISH SUBJECт of is Bushido code, etc.), or for the reverse case of the Western journalist in search of the particular secret of Japanese success: this very reference to a particular cultural formula is a screen for the universal anonymity Capital. The true horror lies not in the particular content hidden beneath universality of global Capital but, rather, in the fact that Capital effectively an anonymous global machine blindly running its course; that there is in fact no particular Secret Agent animating it. The horror is not the (particular living) ghost in the (dead universal) machine, but the (dead universal) machine in the very heart of each (particular living) ghost. The conclusion to be drawn is thus that the problematic of multiculturalism (the hybrid coexistence of diverse cultural life-worlds) which imposes itself today is the form of appearance of its opposite, of the massive presence of capitalism as global world system: it bears witness to the unprecedented homogenization of today's world. It is in fact as if, since the horizon of social imagination no longer allows us to entertain the idea of an eventual demise of capitalism - since, as we might put it, everybody tacitly accepts that capitalism is here to stay - critical energy has found a substitute outlet in fighting for cultural differences which leave the basic homogeneity of the capitalist world-system intact. So we are fighting our PC battles for the rights of ethnic minorities, of gays and lesbians, of different lifestyles, and so forth, while capitalism pursues its triumphant march - and today's critical theory, in the guise of 'cultural studies', is performing the ultimate service for the unrestrained development of capitalism by actively participating in the ideological effort to render its massive presence invisible: in the predominant form of postmodern 'cultural criticism', the very mention of capitalism as a world system tends to give rise to accusations of 'essentialism', 'fundamentalism', and so on. The price of this depoliticization of the economy is that the domain of politics itself is in a way depoliticized: political struggle proper is transformed into the cultural struggle for the recognition of marginal identities and the tolerance of differences.46 The falsity of elitist multiculturalist liberalism lies in the tension between content and form which already characterized the first great ideological project of tolerant universalism, that of Freemasonry: the doctrine of Freemasonry (the universal brotherhood of all men based on the light of Reason) clearly clashes with its form of expression and organization (a secret society with its initiation rituals); that is, it is the very form of expression and articulation of Freemasonry which belies its positive doctrine. In a strictly homologous way, the contemporary 'politically correct' liberal attitude which perceives itself as surpassing the POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 219 limitations of its ethnic identity ('citizen of the world' without anchors in any particular ethnic community) functions, within its own society, as a narrow elitist upper-middle-class circle clearly opposing itself to the majority of common people, despised for being caught in their narrow ethnic or community confines. No wonder liberal multiculturalist tolerance is caught in the vicious cycle of simultaneously conceding too much and not enough to the

particularity of the Other's culture: On the one hand, it tolerates the Other in so far as it is not the real Other, but the aseptic Other of premodern ecological wisdom, fascinating rites, and so on - the moment one is dealing with the real Other (say, of clitoridectomy, of women compelled to wear the veil, of torturing encmies to death...), with the way the Other regulates the specificity of its jouissance, tolcrance stops. Significantly, the same multiculturalists who oppose Eurocentrism also, as a rule, oppose the death penalty, dismissing it as a remainder of primitive barbaric customs of vengcance - here, their hidden true Eurocentrism becomes visible (thcir entire argumentation against the death penalty is strictly 'Eurocentrist', involving the liberal notions of human dignity and penalty, and relying on an evolutionary schema from primitive violent societies to modern tolerant societies able to overcome the principle of vengeance). • On the other hand, the tolerant multiculturalist liberal sometimes tolerates even the most brutal violations of human rights, or is at least reluctant to condemn them, afraid of being accused of imposing one's own values on to the Other. From my own youth, I recall Maoist students preaching and practising the 'sexual revolution'; when they were reminded that the China of the Maoist Cultural Revolution involved an extremely 'repressive' attitude towards sexuality, they were quick to answer that sexuality plays a totally different role in their lifc-world, so we should not impose on them our standards of what is 'repressive' - their attitude towards sexuality appears 'repressive' only by our Western standards. Do we not encounter the same stance today when multiculturalists warn us not to impose our Eurocentrist notion of universal human rights on to the Other? Furthermore, is not this kind of false 'tolerance' often evoked by spokesmen for multinational Capital itself, in order to legitimize the fact that 'business comes first'? The key point is to assert the complementarity of these two excesses, of too much and not enough: if the first attitude is unable to perceive the specific cultural jouissance which even a 'victim' can find in a practice of 220 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT of another culture that appears cruel and barbaric to us (victims of clitoridectomy often perceive it as the way to regain the properly feminine dignity), the second attitude fails to perceive the fact that the Other is split in itself - that members of another culture, far from simpły identifying with their customs, can acquire a distance towards them and revolt against them - in such cases, reference to the 'Western' notion universal human rights can well serve as the catalyst which sets in motion an authentic protest against the constraints of one's own culture. In other words, there is no happy medium between 'too much' and 'not enough'; so when a multiculturalist replies to our criticism with a desperate plea: 'Whatever I do is wrong - either I am too tolerant towards the injustice the Other suffers, or I am imposing my own values on to the Other - so what do you want me to do?', our answer should be: 'Nothing! As long as you remain stuck in your false presuppositions, you can do nothing!" What the liberal multiculturalist fails to notice is that each of the two cultures engaged in 'communication' is caught in its own antagonism which has prevented it from fully 'becoming itself and the only authentic communication is that of 'solidarity in a common struggle', when I

discover that the deadlock which hampers me is also the deadlock which hampers the Other. Does this mean that the solution lies in acknowledging the 'hybrid' character of each identity? It is easy to praise the hybridity of the postmodern migrant subject, no longer attached to specific ethnic roots, floating freely between different cultural circles. Unfortunately, two totally different sociopolitical levels are condensed here: on the one hand the cosmopolitan upper- and upper-middle-class academic, always with the proper visas enabling him to cross borders without any problem in order to carry out his (financial, academic...) business, and thus able to 'enjoy the difference'; on the other hand the poor (im)migrant worker driven from his home by poverty or (ethnic, religious) violence, for whom the celebrated 'hybridity' designates a very tangible traumatic experience of never being able to settle down properly and legalize his status, the subject for whom such simple tasks as crossing a border or reuniting with his family can be an experience full of anxiety, and demanding great effort. For this second subject, being uprooted from his traditional way of life is a traumatic shock which destabilizes his entire existence - to tell him that he should enjoy the hybridity and the lack of fixed identity of his daily life, the fact that his existence is migrant, never identical-to-itself, and so on, involves the same cynicism as that at work in the (popularized version of) Deleuze and Guattari's celebration of the schizo-subject whose rhizotive POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 221 an matic pulverized existence explodes the paranoiac 'proto-Fascist' protecshield of fixed identity: what is, for the concerned subject, experience of the utmost suffering and despair, the stigma of exclusion, of being unable to participate in the affairs of his community, is - from point of vicw of the external and well, 'normal', and fully adapted postmodern theoretician - celebrated as the ultimate assertion of subversive desiring machine. the For a Leftist Suspension of the Law the How, then, do Leftists who are aware of this falsity of multiculturalist postmodernism react to it? Their reaction assumes the form of the Hegelian infinite judgement, which posits the speculative identity of two thoroughly incompatible terms: 'Adorno (the most sophisticated "elitist" critical theorist) is Buchanan (the lowest point of American rightist populism). 47 That is to say: these critics of postmodern multiculturalist elitism (from Christopher Lasch to Paul Piccone) take the risk of endorsing neo-conservative populism, with its notions of the reassertion of community, local democracy and active citizenship, as the only politically relevant answer to the all-pervasive predominance of 'instrumental Reason', of the bureaucratization and instrumentalization of our life-world. 48 Of course, it is easy to dismiss today's populism as a nostalgic reactive formation against the process of modernization, and as such inherently paranoiac, in search of an external cause of malignancy, of a secret agent who pulls the strings and is thus responsible for the woes of modernization (Jews, international Capital, non-patriotic multiculturalist managers, state bureaucracy...); the problem is, rather, to conceive of this new populism as a new form of 'false transparency' which, far from presenting a serious obstacle to capitalist modernization, paves the way for it. What these leftist advocates of populism fail to perceive is thus the fact that today's populism, far from

presenting a threat to global capitalism, remains its inherent product. Paradoxically, today's true conservatives are, rather, leftist 'critical theorists' who reject both liberal multiculturalism and fundamentalist populism - who clearly perceive the complicity between global capitalism and ethnic fundamentalism. They point towards a third domain, which belongs neither to the global market society nor to the new forms of ethnic fundamentalism: the domain of the political, the public space of civil society, of active responsible citizenship (the fight for human rights, 222 THE TICKLISH SUBJECт ecology, etc.). However, the problem is that this very form of the political space is increasingly threatened by the onslaught of globalization; consequently, one cannot simply return to it or revitalize it: the post-nationstate logic of Capital remains the Real which lurks in the background, while all three main leftist reactions to the process of globalization (liberal multiculturalism; the attempt to embrace populism by discerning, beneath its fundamentalist appearance, resistance to 'instrumental reason'; the attempt to keep open the space of the political) seem inappropriate. Although the last approach is based on an accurate insight into the complicity between multiculturalism and fundamentalism, it avoids the crucial question: how are we to reinvent the political space in today's conditions of globalization? The politicization of the series of particular struggles which leaves the global process of Capital intact is clearly not sufficient. This means that one should reject the opposition which, within the frame of late capitalist liberal democracy, imposes itself as the main axis of ideological struggle: the tension between 'open' post-ideological universalist liberal tolerance and the particularist 'new fundamentalisms'. Against the liberal Centre which presents itself as neutral, post-ideological, relying on the rule of Law, one should reassert the old leftist motif of the necessity to suspend the neutral space of Law. Of course, both Left and Right involve their own mode of suspension of the Law on behalf of some higher or more fundamental interest. The rightist suspension, from anti-Dreyfussards to Oliver North, acknowledges its violation of the letter of the Law, but justifies it by reference to some higher national interest: it presents its violation as a painful self-sacrifice for the good of the Nation.49 As for the leftist suspension, it is enough to mention two films, Under Fire and Watch on the Rhine. The first takes place during the Nicaraguan revolution, when an American photo-journalist faces a troublesome dilemma: just before the victory of the revolution, Somozistas kill a charismatic Sandinista leader, so the Sandinistas ask the journalist to fake a photo of their dead leader, presenting him as still alive and thus belying the Somozistas' claims about his death - in this way, he would contribute to a swift victory for the revolution and shorten the agony of prolonged bloodshed. Professional ethics, of course, striculy prohibit such an act, since it violates the unbiased objectivity of reporting and makes the journalist an instrument of the political fight; the journalist nevertheless chooses the 'leftist' option and fakes the photo.... In Watch on the Rhine, based on a play by Lillian Hellman, this dilemma is even more acute: in the late 1930s, a fugitive family of German political emigrants involved in the anti-Nazi struggle comes to stay with their POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS

VICISSITUDES 223 distant relatives, an idyllic all-American small-town middle-class family; soon, however, the Germans face an unexpected threat in the form of an acquaintance of the American family, a Rightist who blackmails the emigrants and, through his contacts with the German Embassy, endangers members of the Underground in Germany itself. The father of the emigrant family decides to kill him, and thereby puts the American family in a difficult moral dilemma: their empty moralizing solidarity with the victims of Nazism is over; now they actually have to take sides and dirty their hands with covering up the killing.... Here also, the family decides on the 'leftist' option. 'Left' is defined by this readiness to suspend the abstract moral frame - or, to paraphrase Kierkegaard, to accomplish a kind of political suspension of the Ethical.50 The lesson of all this, which gained actuality apropos of the Western reaction to the Bosnian war, is thus that there is no way to avoid being partial, since the neutral stance itself involves taking sides (in the case of the Bosnian war, the 'balanced' talk about Balkan ethnic 'tribal warfare already endorses the Serbian standpoint): humanitarian liberal equidistance can easily slip into or coincide with its opposite and in effect tolerate the most violent 'ethnic cleansing'. In short, the Leftist does not simply violate the Liberal's impartial neutrality; what he claims is that there is no such neutrality: that the Liberal's impartiality is always-already biased. The cliché of the liberal Centre, of course, is that both suspensions, the rightist and the leftist, ultimately amount to the same: to a totalitarian threat to the rule of law. The entire consistency of the Left hinges on proving that, on the contrary, each of the two suspensions follows a different logic. While the Right legitimizes its suspension of the Ethical by its antiuniversalist stance - that is, by a reference to its particular (religious, patriotic) identity which overrules any universal moral or legal standards - the Left legitimizes its suspension of the Ethical precisely by means of a reference to the true Universality to come. Or - to put it another way - the Left simultaneously accepts the antagonistic character of society (there is no neutral position, struggle is constitutive) and remains universalist (speaking on behalf of universal emancipation): in the leftist perspective, accepting the radically antagonistic - that is, political - character of social life, accepting the necessity of 'taking sides', is the only way to be effectively universal. How are we to comprehend this paradox? It can be conceived only if the antagonism is inherent to universality itself, that is, if universality itself is split into the 'false' concrete universality that legitimizes the existing division of the Whole into functional parts, and the impossible/rcal 224 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT demand of 'abstract' universality (Balibar's égaliberté again). The leftist political gesture par excellence (in contrast to the rightist slogan 'to each his or her own place') is thus to question the concrete existing universal order on behalf of its symptom, of the part which, although inherent to the existing universal order, has no 'proper place' within it (say, illegal immigrants or the homeless in our societies). This procedure of identifying with the symptom is the exact and necessary obverse of the standard criticoideological move of recognizing a particular content behind some abstract universal notion, that is, of denouncing neutral universality as false ('the "man" of human rights is actually the

white male property-owner...') one pathetically asserts (and identifies with) the point of inherent exception/ exclusion, the 'abject', of the concrete positive order, as the only point of true universality. It is easy to show that, say, the subdivision of the people who live in a country into 'full' citizens and temporary immigrant workers privileges 'full' citizens and excludes immigrants from the public space proper (just as man and woman are not two species of a neutral universal genus of humanity, since the content of the genus as such involves some mode of 'repression' of the feminine); much more productive, theoretically as well as politically (since it opens up the way for the 'progressive' subverting of hegemony), is the opposite operation of identifying universality with the point of exclusion - in our case, of saying 'we are all immigrant workers'. In a hierarchically structured society, the measure of true universality lies in the way parts relate to those 'at the bottom', excluded by and from all others (in ex-Yugoslavia, for example, universality was represented by Albanian and Bosnian Muslims, looked down on by all other nations). The recent pathetic statement of solidarity 'Sarajevo is the capital of Europe' was also an exemplary case of such a notion of exception as embodying universality: the way enlightened liberal Europe related to Sarajevo bore witness to the way it related to itself, to its universal notion. The examples we have evoked make it clear that leftist universalism proper does not involve any kind of return to some neutral universal content (a common notion of humanity, etc.); rather, it refers to a universal which comes to exist (which becomes 'for itself, to put it in Hegelese) only in a particular element which is structurally displaced, 'out of joint': within a given social Whole, it is precisely the element which is prevented from actualizing its full particular identity that stands for its universal dimension. The Greek demos stood for universality not because it covered the majority of the population, nor because it occupied the lowest place within the social hierarchy, but because it had no proper place POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 225 within this hierarchy, but was a site of conflicting, self-cancelling determinations or, to put it in contemporary terms, a site of performative contradictions (they were addressed as equals - participating in the community of logos in order to be informed that they were excluded from this community...). To take Marx's classic example, 'proletariat' stands for universal humanity not because it is the lowest, most exploited class, but because its very existence is a 'living contradiction' - that is, it gives body to the fundamental imbalance and inconsistency of the capitalist social Whole. We can see, now, in what precise way the dimension of the Universal is opposed to globalism: the universal dimension 'shines through' the symptomatic displaced element which belongs to the Whole without being properly its part. For this reason, criticism of the possible ideological functioning of the notion of hybridity should in no way advocate the return to substantial identities - the point is precisely to assert hybridity as the site of the Universal.51 In so far as normative heterosexuality stands for the global Order within which each sex is assigned its proper place, queer demands are not simply demands that their sexual practice and lifestyle be recognized in their specificity, alongside other practices, but something

that unsettles the very global order and its exclusionary hierarchical logic; precisely as such, as 'out of joint' with regard to the existing order, queers stand for the dimension of Universality (or, rather, can stand for it, since politicization is never directly inscribed into one's objective social position, but involves the gesture of subjectivization). Judith Butler52 develops a powerful argument against the abstract and politically regressive opposition between economic struggle and the 'merely cultural' queer struggle for recognition: far from being 'merely cultural', the social form of sexual reproduction inhabits the very core of the social relations of production; that is, the nuclear heterosexual family is a key component and condition of the capitalist relations of ownership, exchange, and so on; for that reason, the way queer political practice questions and undermines normative heterosexuality posesapotential threat to the capitalist mode of production itself.... My reaction to this thesis is twofold: I fully endorse queer politics in so far as it 'metaphoricizes' its specific struggle as something that - if its objectives were to be realized - undermines the very potentials of capitalism. However, I tend to think that, in the course of the ongoing transformation into the 'post-political' tolerant multiculturalist regime, today's capitalist system is able to neutralize queer demands, to absorb them as a specific 'way of life'. Is not the history of capitalism a long history of how the predominant ideologico-political framework was able 226 the THE TICKLISH SUBJECTт to accommodate (and soften the subversive edge of) the movements and demands that seemed to threaten its very survival? For a long time, sexual libertarians thought that monogamous sexual repression was necessary for survival of capitalism - now we know that capitalism can not only tolerate, but even actively incite and exploit, forms of 'perverse' sexuality, not to mention promiscuous indulgence in sexual pleasures. What if the same destiny awaits queer demands?53 The recent proliferation of different sexual practices and identities (from sadomasochism to bisexuality drag performances), far from posing a threat to the present regime biopower (to use the Foucauldian terms), is precisely the form sexuality that is generated by the present conditions of global capitalism, which clearly favour the mode of subjectivity characterized by multiple shifting identifications. and of of The key component of the 'leftist' position is thus the equation of the assertion of Universalism with a militant, divisive position of one engaged in a struggle: true universalists are not those who preach global tolcrance of differences and all-encompassing unity, but those whono engage in a passionate fight for the assertion of the Truth that cnthuses them. Theoretical, religious and political examples abound here: from St Paul, whose unconditional Christian universalism (everyone can be redecmed, since, in the eyes of Christ, there are no Jews and Greeks, no men and women...) made him into a proto-Leninist militant fighting different 'deviations', through Marx (whose notion of class struggle is the necessary obverse of the universalism of his theory which aims at the 'redemption' of the whole of humanity) and Freud, up to great political figures - say, when De Gaulle, almost alone in England in 1940, launched his call for resistance to German occupation, he was at the same time presuming to

speak on behalf of the universality of France, and, for this very reason, introducing a radical split, a fissure, between those who followed him and those who preferred the collaborationist 'Egyptian fleshpots'. To put it in Badiou's words, it is crucial here not to translate the terms of this struggle (set in motion by the violent and contingent assertion of the new universal Truth) into the terms of the order of Being, with its groups and subgroups, conceiving it as the struggle between two social entities defined by a series of positive characteristics; that was the 'mistake of Stalinism, which reduced the class struggle to a struggle between 'classes' defined as social groups with a set of positive features (place in the mode of production, etc.). From a truly radical Marxist perspective, although there is a link between 'working class' as a social group and 'proletariat' as the position of the militant fighting for universal Truth, POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 227 this link is not a determining causal connection, and the two levels must - be strictly distinguished: to be a 'proletarian' involves assuming a certain subjective stance (of class struggle destined to achieve the Redemption through Revolution) which, in principle, can be adopted by any individual to put it in religious terms, irrespective of his (good) works, any individual can be 'touched by Grace' and interpellated as a proletarian subject. The line that separates the two opposing sides in the class struggle is therefore not 'objective', it is not the line separating two positive social groups, but ultimately radically subjective – it involves the position individuals assume towards the Truth-Event. Subjectivity and universalism are thus not only not exclusive, but two sides of the same coin: it is precisely because 'class struggle' interpellates individuals to adopt the subjective stance of a 'proletarian' that its appeal is universal, aiming at everyone without exception. The division it mobilizes is not the division between two well-defined social groups, but the division, which runs 'diagonally' to the social division in the Order of Being, between those who recognize themselves in the call of the Truth-Event, becoming its followers, and those who deny or ignore it. In Hegelese, the existence of the true Universal (as opposed to the false 'concrete' Universality of the allencompassing global Order of Being) is that of an endless and incessantly divisive struggle; it is ultimately the division between the two notions (and material practices) of Universality: those who advocate the positivity of the Order of Being as the ultimate horizon of knowledge and action, and those who accept the efficiency of the dimension of TruthEvent irreducible to (and unaccountable in the terms of) the Order of Being. is That is the ultimate gap that separates Nazism from Communism: in Nazism, a Jew is ultimately guilty simply because he is a Jew, because of his direct natural properties, because of what he is; while even in the darkest days of Stalinism a member of the bourgeoisie or aristocracy is not guilty per se, that is, directly because of his social status - there always a minimum of subjectivization involved; participation in the class struggle relics on the subjective act of decision. In a perverted way, the very function of confession in the Stalinist show trial attests to this difference: for the guilt of the traitor to be effective, the accused must confess, that is, subjectively assume his guilt, in clear contrast to Nazism,

where an analogous confession by a Jew that he was participating in a plot against Germany would be meaningless. It is at this point that the revisionist historians' argumentation according to which the Nazi Holocaust was already foreshadowed by the Leninist liquidation of the 228 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT ex-ruling classes (in both cases people were killed simply because of what they were, not because of their deeds) misses the point. For that reason, the anti-Communist revisionist historian's thesis according to which the Nazi Holocaust did not only follow in time the Communist purges of the enemies of the revolution in the Soviet Union, but was also causally conditioned by them (conceived as a reaction or, rather, a preventive strike against them) misses the point. The revisionists are quite right to stress that the Nazi struggle against the Jewish plot was a repetition/copy of the Communist class struggle - however, far from exculpating the Nazis, this fact brings home all the more the difference between Nazism and Communism: what for the Communists was the antagonism that dwells in the very kernel of the social edifice was, in Nazi ideology, 'naturalized' into the biological property of a specific race (the Jews). So instead of the notion of society as divided/traversed by the class struggle, in which everybody is compelled to take sides, we get the notion of society as a corporate body threatened by an external enemy: the Jew as the foreign intruder. Consequently, it is totally misguided to conceive the Communist revolutionary terror and the Nazi Holocaust as the two modes of the same totalitarian violence (in the first case the gap between Us and Them, the enemy, and the enemy's annihilation, were justified in terms of class difference - it is legitimate to destroy members of the opposing class - and in the second, in terms of racial difference - it is legitimate to kill Jews): the true horror of Nazism lies in the very way it displaced/naturalized social antagonism into racial difference, making the Jews guilty because of the simple fact that they were Jews, independently of what they did, of how they subjectivized their condition. The Ambiguity of Excremental Identification For Rancière, subjectivization involves the assertion of a singulier universel, the singular/excessive part of the social edifice that directly gives body to the dimension of universality. Perhaps this logic of singulier universel is, like Badiou's thought, profoundly Christological: is not the ultimate 'universal singular', the singular individual standing for humanity, Christ himself? Does not the revolution of Christianity lie in the fact that, accordance with the logic of 'identification with the symptom', it offers as this singular point, which stands for the true Universal, not what is 'the highest of Man' but the lowest excremental remainder - only by identifyin POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 229 ing with this remainder, by imitatio Christi, can a person 'reach eternity' and become effectively universal. And perhaps this Christological reference also makes palpable a possible limitation of the political efficiency of the gesture of 'identification with the symptom'. Christianity's entire theological edifice relies on such an excremental identification - on the identification with the poor figure of the suffering Christ dying in pain between the two thieves. The artifice by means of which Christianity became the ruling ideology was to combine this radical excremental identification with full endorsement of the

existing hierarchical social order: 'rich and poor, honest men and sinners, masters and slaves, men and women, neighbours and foreigners, we are all united in Christ'. Although this excremental identification imposed compassion and merciful care for the poor (the 'do not forget that they are also God's children' motif) by reminding the rich and powerful that their position is precarious and contingent, it none the less confirmed them in this position, and even proclaimed every open rebellion against the existing power relations a mortal sin. The pathetic assertion 'We are all [Jews, Blacks, gays, residents of Sarajevo...)' can thus work in an extremely ambiguous way: it can also induce a hasty claim that our own predicament is in fact the same as that of the true victims, that is, a false metaphoric universalization of the fate of the excluded. Soon after the publication of Solzhenitsyn's Gulag trilogy in the West, it became fashionable in some 'radical' leftist circles to emphasize how 'our entire consumerist Western society is also one gigantic Gulag, in which we are imprisoned by the chains of the ruling ideology - and our position is even worse, since we are unaware of our true predicament'. In a recent discussion about clitoridectomy, a 'radical' feminist pathetically claimed that Western women are in a way also thoroughly circumcised, having to undergo stressful diets, rigorous body training and painful breast- or facelifting operations in order to remain attractive to men.... Although, of course, there is in both cases, an element of truth in the claims made, there is none the less something fundamentally faked in the pathetic statement of a radical upper-middle-class student that 'the Berkeley campus is also a gigantic Gulag'. Is it not deeply significant that the bestknown example of such a pathetic identification with the outcast/victim is J.F. Kennedy's 'Ich bin ein Berliner' from 1963 - a statement which is definitely not what Rancière had in mind (and, incidentally, a statement which, because of a grammatical error, means, when retranslated into English, 'I am a doughnut')? The way out of this predicament seems easy enough: the mcasure of 230 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT the authenticity of the pathetic identification lies in its sociopolitical efficiency. To what effective measures does it amount? In short, how does this political stance of singulier universel affect what Rancière calls the police structure? Is there a legitimate distinction between two 'polices (orders of Is we being)': the one which is (or tends to be) self-contained, and the one which is more open to the incorporation of properly political demands? there something like a 'police of politics'? Of course, the Kantian answer (shared even by Badiou) would be that any direct identification of police (the Order of Being) with politics (the Truth-Event), any procedure by means of which the Truth posits itself directly as the constitutive structuring principle of the sociopolitical Order of Being, leads to its opposite, to the 'politics of the police', to revolutionary Terror, whose exemplary case is the Stalinist désastre. The problem is that the moment try to provide the pathetic identification with the symptom, the assertion of the universel singulier, with a determinate content (What do protesters who pathetically claim 'We are all immigrant workers!' actually wan? What is their demand to the Police Power?), the old contrast between the radical universalism of égaliberté and the 'postmodern'

assertion of particular identities reappears with a vengeance, as is clear from the deadlock of gay politics, which fears losing its specificity when gays are acknowledged by the public discourse: do you want equal rights or specific rights to safeguard your particular way of life? The answer, of course, is that the pathetic gesture of singulier universel effcctively functions as hysterical gesture made to avoid the decision by postponing its satisfaction indefinitely. That is to say: the gesture of singulier universel flourishes on bombarding the Police/Power edifice with impossible demands, with demands which are 'made to be rejected'; its logic is that of 'In demanding that you do this, I am actually demanding that you do not do it, because that's not it.' The situation here is properly undecidable: not only is a radical political project often 'betrayed' by a compromise with the Police Order (the eternal complaint of revolutionary radicals: once the reformists take over, they change only the form and accommodate themselves to the old masters), there can also be the opposite case of pseudoradicalization, which fits the existing power relations much better than a modest reformist proposal.54 a The further distinction to be made here is between the two opposed subjects of the enunciation of the statement that asserts the universel singulier. is this statement the direct statement of the excluded victim itself (of demos in old Athens; of the troisième état in the French Revolution; of Jews, Palestinians, Blacks, women, gays... today), which proposes its POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 231 particular plight as representative of the universality of 'humanity', or is it the statement of solidarity made by others, the concerned 'enlightened public'? How do these two modes of functioning relate to onc another? The difference in question is the difference between the universal Public claiming: 'We are all them (the excluded non-part)!' and the excluded non-part claiming: 'We are the true Universal [the People, Socicty, Nation...!]' - this reversal, although apparently purely symmetrical, never produces direct symmetrical effects. What we encounter here is a key feature of the mechanism that generates (ideological) semblance: the symmetrical reversal that produces an asymmetrical result. In Marx, for example, the simple inversion of the 'developed' to the 'general' form of equivalence (from the state in which commodity A expresses its value in the series of commodities B, C, D, E, F..., to the state in which commodity A itself expresses gives body to the value of commodities B, C, D, E, F...) gives rise to the effect of fetishism; that is, it confers on A the aura of a commodity that has to possess some mysterious ingredient enabling it to function as the equivalent of all the others. Hegel also often brings about the deepest speculative shift, a change in the whole terrain of thought, by means of a simple symmetrical inversion. The statement 'The Self is the Substance' is in no way equivalent to the statement 'The Substance is the Self': the first asserts the simple subordination of the Self to the Substance ('I recognize myself as belonging to my social Substance'), while the second involves the subjectivization of the Substance itself. Louis XIV did not say: 'I am the State'; what he said was: 'L'État c'est moi: only in the second version is the finite Self posited as the truth of the Substance itself, so that when Louis XIV issues a decree, it is not only him (this finite individual) who is

speaking, it is the Substance itself which speaks through him (in the precise sense of the Lacanian 'moi, la vérité, parle). Therein, in the necessity of this reversal, lies one of Hegel's crucial insights: the apparently modest gesture of asserting the subordination (the belonging) of subject to Substance sooner or later reveals itself as standing for its exact opposite, for the subjectivization of the Substance itself. Therein also lies the core of Christianity: not only is man divine, God Himself has to become man (with all the latter's finite attributes). For that same reason, 'life is an illusion' is not the same as 'illusion is life': 'life is an illusion' stands for the Baroque attitude of the melancholic awareness of the illusory character of terrestrial lifc (à la Calderón), while 'illusion is life' involves a positive Nietzschean attitude of fully embracing and asserting the game of appearances against the 'nihilist' search for a transcendent 'true' reality - or, if we 232 THE TICKLISH SUBJECCT return to our example, 'We [the nation] are all immigrant workers' is not the same as 'We [immigrant workers] are the true nation. Embracing the Act This is perhaps the moment to return to our starting point: how well are the authors we have been dealing with equipped to accomplish this step of political universalization? Here, the reference to Althusser as their starting point again becomes crucial. As I have already emphasized, their theoretical edifices are to be conceived as four different ways of negating this common starting point, of maintaining (or, rather, gaining) a distance towards Althusser; perhaps it would even be possible to conceptualize their differences by reference to the different ways one can negate/ 'repress' a traumatic kernel in psychoanalysis: denegation, disavowal, repression stricto sensu (coinciding with the return of the repressed), foreclosure... why? Although these authors made important progress with regard to their Althusserian starting point (their everlasting merit is that they went forward from Althusser without allowing themselves to be immersed in the postmodern and/or deconstructionist morass), they seem to fall into the trap of 'marginalist' politics, accepting the logic of momentary outbursts of an 'impossible' radical politicization that contains the seeds of its own failure and has to recede in the face of the existing Order (the couples of Truth-Event versus Order of Being; of politics versus police; of égaliberté versus imaginary universality). This common feature is closely linked to the reduction of the subject to the process of subjectivization. What Rancière aims at is the process by means of which a 'part of no part' becomes involved in litigation for its place within the social visibility; what Badiou aims at is engagement grounded in fidelity to the Truth-Event; what Balibar aims at is a political agent insisting on his 'impossible demand for égaliberté against any positive order of its actualization. In all these cases, subjectivization, of course, is not to be confused with what Althusser had in mind when he elaborated the notion of ideological (mis)recognition and interpellation: here subjectivity is not dismissed as a form of misrecognition; on the contrary, it is asserted as the moment in which the ontological gap/void becomes palpable, as a gesture that undermines the positive order of Being, of the differential structure of Society, of politics as police. It is crucial to perceive the link between this reduction of the subject to POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND

ITS VICISSITUDES 233 subjectivization and the way the theoretical edifice of these authors relies on the basic opposition of two logics: la politique/police and le politique in Rancière; Being and Truth-Event in Badiou; even, perhaps, the imaginary universal order versus égaliberté in Balibar. In all these cases, the second point is properly political, introduces the gap in the positive order of Being: a situation becomes 'politicized' when a particular demand starts to function as a stand-in for the impossible Universal. Thus we have various forms of the opposition between Substance and Subject, between a positive ontological order (police, Being, structure) and a gap of impossibility which prevents a final closure of this order and/or disturbs its balance. The ultimate reference of these three forms of duality seems to be the Kantian opposition between the constituted order of objective reality and the Idea of Freedom that can function only as a regulative point of reference, since it is never ontologically fully actualized. 'Justice', the rectification of the fundamental and constitutive ontological injustice of the universe, is presented as an unconditional impossible demand, possible only against the background of its own impossibility: the moment a political movement pretends fully to realize Justice, to translate it into an actual state of things, to pass from the spectral démocratie à venir to 'actual democracy', we are in totalitarian catastrophe - in Kantian terms, the Sublime changes into the Monstrous.... Of course, these two levels are not simply external: the space for the political Truth-Event is opened up by the symptomatic void in the order of Being, by the necessary inconsistency in its structural order, by the constitutive presence of a surnuméraire, of an element which is included in the totality of Order, although there is no proper place for it in this totality, and which, for this very reason - since it is an element without further particular specifications - professes to be the immediate embodiment of the Whole. On the other hand, the properly political intervention endeavours to bring about change in the order of police, its restructuring (so that what was hitherto 'invisible' and/or 'nonexistent' in its space becomes visible). Two Hegelian conclusions should be drawn from this: (1) the very notion of politics involves conflict between the political and apolitical/ police - that is, politics is the antagonism between politics proper and the apolitical attitude ('disorder' and Order); (2) for this reason, 'politics' is a genus which is its own species: which, ultimately, has two species, itself and its 'corporatist'/police negation. Despite this Hegelian twist, however, we are dealing here with a logic which includes its own failure in advance, which considers its full success as its ultimate failure, which sticks to its marginal character as the ultimate sign of its authenticity, and thus 234 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT entertains an ambiguous attitude towards its politico-ontological opposite, the police Order of Being: it has to refer to it, it needs it as the big enemy ('Power') which must be there in order for us to engage in our marginal/ subversive activity - the very idea of accomplishing a total subversion of this Order ('global revolution') is dismissed as proto-totalitarian. of This criticism should not be misread as relying on the traditional Hegelian opposition of abstract and concrete universality: against the assertion of radical negativity as the obverse of universality - of the logic the Ought that

indefinitely postpones its actualization - I am not advocating the necessity of embracing the 'concrete' positive order as the realized Supreme Good. The Hegelian move here is not a resigned-heroic acceptance of the positive Order as the only possible actualization Reason, but to focus on, to reveal, how the police/political Order itself already relies on a series of disavowed/misrecognized political acts, how its founding gesture is political (in the radical sense of the term, as opposed to police) - in Hegelcse, how positive Order is nothing but the positivation of the radical negativity. of Let us take Rancière's central notion of mésentente ('misapprehension'), which occurs when the excluded/invisible 'part of no part' politicizes its predicament and disturbs the established police/political structure of the social space, its subdivision in parts, by asserting itself as the stand-in for the Whole and demanding the rearticulation of its particular position, that is, a new mode of its visibility (say, a woman 'politicizes' her predicament the moment she presents her limitation to the private family space as a case of political injustice). Does not the ambiguous relationship between the explicit power/police discourse and its obscene double also involve a kind of mésentente? Is not this obscene double (the publicly disavowed message 'between the lines') the 'invisible', non-public condition of possibility of the functioning of the police apparatus? Power is thus not a unique/flat domain of visibility, the self-transparent machine to which the 'people' opposes its demand to reveal, to accept into the public discursive space, its demands - that is, to reject/subvert the (non-)identical status it enjoys within the power/police discourse; the (almost) symmetrical opposite to this is the refusal of the public power/police discourse to 'hear/understand' its own message between the lines, the obscene support of its functioning - confronted with it, it rejects it with contempt as unworthy of its dignity. What Power 'refuses to sec' is not so much the (non-)part of the 'people' excluded from the police space but, rather, the invisible support of its own public police apparatus. (In terms of a vulgar class analysis: POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 235 there is no rule of aristocracy without the hidden - publicly unacknowledged - support of the Lumpenproletariat.) Our point is thus that the marginalist radical refusal to assume responsibility for Power (in Lacanese: its hidden demand for the Master in the guise of his public provocation - see Lacan's diagnosis of the hysterical character of the student rebellion of May '68) is strictly correlative to (or the obverse of) Power's hidden link with its own disavowed obscene supplement - what a truly 'subversive political intervention has to strive to include in the public space is above all this obscene supplement on which the Power/Police itself relies. The order of police is never simply a positive order: to function at all, it has to cheat, to misname, and so on - in short, to engage in politics, to do what its subversive opponents are supposed to do. In Kant's political thought, the basic principle (the equivalent of the moral categorical imperative) is the 'transcendental principle of publicity': 'All acts which concern the rights of other people and whose maxim does not coincide with their publicly announced aim, are wrong.... All guiding principles which need publicity (if they are not to miss their goal) are in accord with justice and with politics.

55 In the political domain, wrong or evil is an act whose actual aim contradicts its publicly announced goal: as Kant emphasizes again and again, even the worst tyrant publicly pretends to work for the good of the people, while pursuing his own power and wealth. We may put this same maxim in a negative way: a politics is 'wrong (unjust)' when it holds that the public disclosure of its actual motives (or, rather, maxims) would be self-defeating: even a tyrant cannot publicly say: 'I am imposing this law in order to crush my enemies and increase my wealth.' - It is against this background that one should locate the thesis on the superego supplement of public ideological discourse: the superego obscene supplement is precisely the support of the public ideological text which, in order to be operative, has to remain publicly disavowed: its public avowal is self-defeating. And our point is that such a disavowal is constitutive of what Rancière calls the order of 'police'. The notion of the Ideal of égaliberté as a real/impossible unconditional demand betrayed in its every positivization, a demand which can actualize itself only in those short intermediary moments of Power/Police Vacuum when the 'people' 'spontaneously' organizes itself outside the official representative political machinery (see the fascination of many Leftists for 'spontaneous council democracy' in the carly, 'authentic' stages of the revolution), brings radical revolutionary purists uncannily close to those conservatives who endeavour to prove the necessary and unavoidable 236 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT betrayal or 'regression into terror' of every revolution, as if the only possible actualization of égaliberté is the Khmer Rouge or the Sendero Luminoso. One is tempted to claim that Leninist politics is the true counterpoint to this Kantian marginalist leftist attitude which insists on its own inherent impossibility. That is to say: what a true Leninist and a political conservative have in common is the fact that they reject what one could call liberal leftist 'irresponsibility' (advocating grand projects of solidarity, freedom, and so on, yet ducking out when one has to pay the price for them in the guise of concrete and often 'cruel' political measures): like an authentic conservative, a true Leninist is not afraid of the passage à l'acte, of accepting all the consequences, unpleasant as they may be, of realizing his political project. Kipling (whom Brecht admired very much) despised British liberals who advocated freedom and justice, while silently counting on the Conservatives to do the necessary dirty work for them; the same can be said for the liberal Leftist's (or 'democratic Socialist's') relationship to Leninist Communists: liberal Leftists reject social-democratic 'compromise', they want a true revolution, yet they shirk the actual price to be paid for it, and thus prefer to adopt the attitude of a Beautiful Soul and keep their hands clean. In contrast to this false liberal leftist position (they want true democracy for the people, but without secret police to fight counter-revolution, without their academic privileges being threatened...), a Leninist, like a Conservative, is authentic in the sense of fully assuming the consequences of his choice, of being fully aware of what it actually means to take power and to exert it. I am now in a position to specify what seems to me the fatal weakness of the proto-Kantian opposition between the positive order of Being (or of the service des biens or of the politics as Police) and the radical,

unconditional demand for égaliberté which signals the presence of the Truth-Event (or the Political), that is, the opposition between the global social order and the dimension of Universality proper, which cuts a line of separation into this global order: what it leaves out of consideration is the 'excess' of the founding gesture of the Master without which the positive order of the service des biens cannot maintain itself. What we are aiming at here is the 'non-economical' excess of the Master over the smooth functioning of the positive police order of Being. In a pluralist society, the marginal 'radical' parties or political agents are able to play the game of unconditional demands, of 'we want this [higher salaries for teachers and doctors, better retirement and social security conditions...], pereat mundus', leaving it to the Master to find a way of meeting their demand - this unconditional demand targets the political Master not POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 237 simply in his capacity as the administrator of the service des biens, but in his capacity as guarantor of the survival of the Order. That is the other crucial aspect of the Master's position: he does not shirk the responsibility of breaking the egg when people demand an omelette - of imposing unpopular but necessary measures. In short, the Master is the one who forever relinquishes the right to claim: 'But I didn't want this!' when things go wrong. Of course, this position is ultimately that of an impostor: his mastery is an illusion; none the less, the very fact that someone is ready to occupy this untenable place has a pacifying effect on his subjects - we can indulge in our petty narcissistic demands, well aware that the Master is here to guarantee that the whole structure will not collapse. The heroism of an authentic Master consists precisely in his willingness to assume this impossible position of ultimate responsibility, and to take upon himself the implementation of unpopular measures which prevent the system from disintegrating. That was the greatness of Lenin after the Bolsheviks took power: in contrast to hysterical revolutionary fervour caught in the vicious cycle, the fervour of those who prefer to stay in opposition and prefer (publicly or secretly) to avoid the burden of taking over, of accomplishing the shift from subversive activity to responsibility for the smooth running of the social edifice, he heroically embraced the onerous task of actually running the State- of making all the necessary compromises, but also taking the necessary harsh measures, to assure that the Bolshevik power would not collapse. So when Rancière or Badiou dismisses politics as a Police which merely takes care of the smooth service des biens, they leave out of consideration the fact that the social Order cannot reproduce itself if it is constrained to the terms of the service des biens: there must be One who assumes the ultimate responsibility, inclusive of a ruthless readiness to make the necessary compromises or break the letter of the Law in order to guarantee the system's survival; and it is totally erroneous to interpret this function as that of an unprincipled pragmatic sticking to power, whatever the cost. The advocates of the Political as opposed to Police fail to take into account this inherent excess of the Master which sustains the service des biens itself: they are unaware of the fact that what they are fighting, what they are provoking with their unconditional demand, is not the 'servicing of goods', but the unconditional

responsibility of the Master. In short, what they are unaware of is that their unconditional demand for égaliberté remains within the confines of the hysterical provocation aimed 238 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 239 at the Master, testing the limits of his ability: 'Can he reject - or meetour demands, and still maintain the appearance of omnipotence?'. The test of the true revolutionary, as opposed to this game of hysterical provocation, is the heroic readiness to endure the conversion of the subversive undermining of the existing System into the principle of a new positive Order which gives body to this negativity - or, in Badiou's terms, the conversion of Truth into Being.56 To put it in more abstract philosophical terms: the fear of the impending 'ontologization' of the proper political act, of its catastrophic transposition into the positive order of Being, is a false fear that results from a kind of perspective illusion: it puts too much trust in the substantial power of the positive order of Being, overlooking the fact that the order of Being is never simply given, but is itself grounded in some preceding Act. There is no Order of Being as a positive ontologically consistent Whole. the false semblance of such an Order relics on the self-obliteration of the Act. In other words, the gap of the Act is not introduced into the Order of Being afterwards: it is there all the time as the condition that actually sustains every Order of Being. Perhaps the ultimate philosophical formulation of the political opposition police/politics is Derrida's opposition between ontology and heauntology, the impossible logic of spectrality that forever prevents/differs/ displaces the closure of the ontological edifice: the proper deconstructionist gesture is to maintain the spectral opening, to resist the temptation of its ontological closure. Again, it is easy to translate this into Lacanese: spectrality is another name for the phantasmic semblance that fills the irreducible ontological gap. The properly Hegelian gesture here would be to turn around this notion of spectrality as the irreducible supplement which is the condition of (im) possibility of any ontology: what if there is a need for a minimal ontological support of the very dimension of spectrality, for some inert peu de réelwhich sustains the spectral opening? In a way, Hegel agrees with Kant that the direct attempt to actualize the abstract negativity of égaliberté (what Kant would have characterized as the political equivalent of the epistemological mistake of treating regulative ideas as constitutive) necessarily ends in terror. The difference between them is that each draws the opposite conclusion: for Kant, it means that égaliberté should remain an inaccessible Ideal to come, démocratie à venir, slowly approached but always kept at a distance in order to avoid the Monstrosity of the abstract absolute negativity; while for Hegel, it means that this monstrous moment of absolute abstract negativity, this self-destructive fury which washes away every positive Order, has always-already happened, since it is the very foundation of the positive rational order of human society. In short, while, for the it Kant, absolute negativity designates an impossible moment of future, a future which will never turn into the present, for Hegel designates an impossible moment of the past, a past which was never fully experienced as the present, since its withdrawal opens up the space for the minimal (social) organization of the Present. There are many

names for this eruption of abstract negativity, from Adam's Fall, through Socrates Christ's crucifixion, to the French Revolution - in all these cases, negative gesture corrosive of the given (social) substantial order grounded a higher, more rational order. and Notes a 1. Is this not also the version of the Lacanian ISR (Imaginary-Symbolic-Real): traditionalism is centred on imaginary Good embodied in the community way of life; modernism on universal Duty; postmodernism on the dissenination of the Real? 2. What one encounters in Lyotard is the ambiguity of the Lacanian Real as that which resists symbolization: on the one hand, we have the dispersal of the pure Multiple not yct totalized/homogenized through some form of the symbolic One each such form of symbolization is already exclusionary, it 'represses' the differend; on the other hand, the ineffable has the form of the absolute Injustice/Crime, the Holocaust, the unique event which cannot be put into words, where no work of symbolic mourning can provide reconciliation. (In ethical terms, this split is the split between the Real as pre-symbolic, prelapsarian, the innocence of the multiple; and the Real as the singular, unique point of absolute, ineffable Evil.) In the first case, injustice is the act of symbolization of the pure Multiple itselfwhich is by nature exclusionary; in the second case, injustice is the traumatic point which, precisely, cannot be symbolized. Violence/injustice is thus simultaneously the act of symbolization and that which eludes symbolization.... The solution to this paradox is that between the primordial Real of the pure Multiple and the symbolic universe there is a 'vanishing mediator', the gesture of/in the Real that grounds symbolization itself, the violent opening up of a gap in the Real which is not yet symbolic. 3. In his criticism of Derrida, Laclau emphasized the gap between Derrida's global philosophical stance (differance, the unavoidable 'out-of-joint' of every identity, etc.) and his politics of démocratie à venir, of openness towards the Event of irreducible Otherness: why shouldn't one draw, from the fact that identity is impossible, the opposite 'totalitarian conclusion that, for that very reason, we need a strong Power to prevent explosion and guarantec a fragile minimum of order? (See Ernesto Laclau, 'The Time is Out of Joint', in Emancipation(s), London: Verso 1996.) However, does not the same hold for Laclau himself? Why shouldn't one, from the notion of a hegemony which involves the irreducible gap between the Universal and the Particular, and thus the structural impossibility of society, opt for a 'strong' totalitarian politics that limits the effects of this gap as much as possible? 4. Laclau, The Time is Out of Joint', p. 123. 5. Another name for this short circuit between the Universal and the Particular, by means of which a particular content hegemonizes the Universal, is, of course, suture. the operation of hegemony 'sutures' the empty Universal to a particular content. For that reason, F.W.J. Schelling must be considered the originator of the modern notion of critique of ideology: he was the first to elaborate the notion of 'false' unity and/or universality. For him. 'evil' lies not in the split (between the Universal and the Particular) as such but, rather, in 240 THE TICKLISH SUBJECт their 'false'/distorted unity, that is, in a Universality that effectively privileges some narrow particular content and is impenetrably 'anchored' in it. Schelling was thus the first to elaborate the elementary

procedure of the critique of ideology: the gesture of discerning, beneath the appearance of neutral universality (say, of 'human rights'), the privileged particular content (say, white upper-middle-class males) which 'hegemonizes' it. See Part I of Slavoj Žižek, The Indivisible Remainder, London: Verso 1995. 6. Laclau, 'The Time is Out of Joint', pp. 14-15. 7. Ibid., p. 44. 8. Ibid., p. 14. 9. Laclau develops this logic apropos of the notion of national unity - see ibid., pp. 94-5. 10. The problem with Jürgen Habermas is that he abandons this 'symptomal' approach to the Universal. Just recall his notion of modernity as an 'unfinished project': what gets lost in Habermas's endeavour to realize the hitherto blocked potentials of the Enlightenment is the properly dialectical insight into how what look like external empirical obstacles preventing the full realization of the Enlightenment project are actually inherent to the very notion of this project. The fundamental Hegelian move is to transpose external into internal limit: the Enlightenment is an 'unfinished project' not because of contingent external circumstances preventing its full implementation, but 'in its very notion' - the fully realized project of Enlightenment would undermine its very notion. 11. See Quentin Skinner, 'Language and Social Change', in Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics, Oxford: Polity Press 1988. 12. No wonder the examples which fit the operation of hegemony as described by Laclau most perfectly are those of rightist populism, from Fascism to Perónism: the royal example of hegemony is the way a conservative attitude reappropriates and inscribes popularrevolutionary motifs into its field. he 13. Lacan tries to do almost the exact opposite: in the last years of his teaching, desperately endeavoured to formulate the precarious status of an 'acephalous', desubjectivized knowledge which would no longer rely on a previous Truth-Event - Lacan's name for such knowledge is drive. 14. This point is elaborated in detaíl in Étienne Balibar, La crainte des masses, Paris: Galilée 1997. 15. This, perhaps, expresses per negationem the formula of true anti-Fascism today: the reversal of the Fascist constellation, that is, technological desacralization at the level of ideology, supplemented by concrete, 'micro-practice', motions to save and strengthen local 'organic' links. 16. Here I draw on Jacques Rancière, La mésentente, Paris: Galilée 1995. 17. One can see why tribal, pre-State societies, with all their authentic proto-democratic procedures for deciding common matters (gathering of all the people, common deliberation, discussion and vote, etc.), are not yet democratic not because politics as such involves society's self-alienation - not because politics is the sphere elevated above concrete social antagonisms (as the standard Marxist argument would claim) - but because the litigation in these prepolitical tribal gatherings lacks the properly political paradox of singulier universel, of the 'part of no part' that presents itself as an immediate stand-in for universality as such. 18. The excremental identification of the burakumin is crucial: when Sue Sumii saw her relative cherishing the Emperor's excrement, her conclusion was that, in the same way, following the tradition of the 'king's two bodies' - of the king's body standing for the social body as such - the burakumin, as the excrement of the social body, should also be cherished. In other words, Sue Sumii took the structural homology between the two

Emperor's bodies more literally and further than usual: even the lowest part (excrement) of the Emperor's body has to be reduplicated in his other, sublime body, which stands for the body of society. Her predicament was similar to that of Plato who, in Parmenides, bravely confronts the embarrassing problem of the precise scope of the relationship between eternal forms/ideas POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 241 and their material copies: which material objects are 'ontologically covered' by eternal Ideas as their models? Is there also an eternal Idea of 'low' objects like mud, filth or excrement? 19. This para-politics, of course, has a series of different successive versions: the main rupture is the one between its classical and modern Hobbesian formulation, which focuses on the problematic of the social contract, the alienation of individual rights in the emergence of sovereign power. Habermasian or Rawlsian ethics are perhaps the last philosophical vestiges of this attitude: the attempt to de-antagonize politics by formulating clear rules to be obeyed so that the agonic procedure of litigation does not explode into politics proper. 20. More precisely, Marxism is more ambiguous, since the very term 'political economy also opens up the space for the opposite gesture of introducing politics into the very heart of the economy, that is, of denouncing the very 'apolitical' character of the economic processes as the supreme ideological illusion. Class struggle does not 'express' some objective economic contradiction, it is the very form of existence of this contradiction. This ambiguity can also be formulated in the terms of Lacan's 'formulas of sexuation': we can read the statement 'everything is political' as the universal statement which involves its point of exception, the objective economic process (so that the ferocious discernment of a hidden political stance in apparently apolitical sublime artistic or ideological products can go hand in hand with the assertion of the economic process as the point of suspension of the political), or according to the logic of 'non-all', that is, in the sense of 'there is nothing which is not political' - here, 'everything is political' means precisely that there is no way of formulating/defining the political itself in a univocal universal way, since every statement about the political is itself already 'politicized'. Fredric Jameson boldly asserts the paradoxical coincidence between the most extreme version of neo-liberalism - the universal modelling of human behaviour as utility-maximization - and Marxist socialism with its emphasis on the economic organization of society, on the 'administration of things', in that both do away with the need for any political thought proper: there is a Marxist political practice, but there is no Marxist political thought. From this standpoint, the traditional complaint against Marxism (that it lacks an autonomous political reflection) appears more as a strength than as a weakness - or, as Jameson concludes: '[wle have much in common with the neo-liberals, in fact virtually everything - save the essentials!' (Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, London: Verso 1992, p. 265- would it be possible, in this sense, to define the stance towards neo-conservatist communitarianism as the obverse one, in so far as a Marxist has in common with it only the essentials [the need for a harmonious organic society]?) The counterargument would be that,

perhaps, this neglect of the proper political dimension had very precise political consequences for the history of the Communist movement do not phenomena like Stalinism indicate precisely a violent return of the repressed political dimension? 21. The clearest indication of this Schmittian disavowal of the political is the primacy of external politics (relations between sovereign states) over internal politics (inner social antagonisms) on which he insists: is not the relationship to an external Other as the Enemy a way of disavowing the internal struggle that traverses the social body? In contrast to Schmitt, a leftist position should insist on the unconditional primacy of the inherent antagonism as constitutive of the political. 22. The metaphoric frame we use in order to account for the political process is thus never innocent and neutral: it 'schematizes' the concrete meaning of politics. Ultra-politics has recourse to the model of warfare. politics is conceived as a form of social warfare, as the relationship to "Them', to an Enemy. Arche-politicss prefer prs to refer to the medical model: society is a corporate body, an organism; social divisions are like illnesses of this organism that is, what we should fight, our enemy, is a cancerous intruder,a pest, a foreign parasite to be exterminated if the health of the social body is to be re-established. Para-politics uses the model of agonistic competition which follows some commonly accepted rules, like a sporting 242 THE TICKLISH SUBJECт event. Meta-politics relies on the model of scientific-technological instrumental procedure, while post-politics involves the model of business negotiation and strategic compromise. 23. See Chapter 2 of Slavoj Žižek, The Plague of Fantasies,London: Verso 1997. 24. Incidentally, this version of 'freedom as conceived necessity', although it may sound 'Hegelian', is the very opposite of the properly Hegelian speculative identification of true Freedom with Necessity: Hegelian freedom is not the act of freely assuming the role of the instrument ofa preordained Necessity. 25. See Claude Lefort, L'invention démocratique, Paris: Fayard 1981. 26. On the other hand, the difference between capitalism and Communism is that Communism was perceived as an Idea which then failed in its realization, while capitalism functioned 'spontaneously': there is no Capitalist Manifesto. In the case of Communism, we can thius play the game of finding the culprit, blaming the Party, Stalin, Lenin, ultimately Marx himself, for the millions of dead, their 'lustration'; while in capitalism, there is nobody on whom one can pin guilt or responsibility; things just happened that way, although capitalism has been no less destructive in terms of human and environmental costs, destroying aboriginal cultures, and so on. 27. See Rancière, La mésentente, pp. 144-6. 28. This crucial distinction between simulacrum (overlapping with the Real) and appearance is easily discernible in the domain of sexuality, as the distinction between pornography and seduction: pornography 'shows it all', 'real sex', and for that very reason produces the mere simulacrum of sexuality; while the process of seduction consists entirely in the play of appearances, hints and promises, and thereby evokes the elusive domain of the suprasensible sublime Thing. 29. In this sense, even Nixon's visit to China and the ensuing establishment of diplomatic relations between the USA and China was a kind of political act, in so far as it actually changed

the parameters of what was considered 'possible (or 'feasible') in the domain of international relations - yes, one could do the unthinkable, and talk normally with the ultimate enemy. 30. See Rancière, La mésentente, p. 162. 31. See Balibar, 'La violence: idéalité et cruauté', in La crainte des masses. 32. For a further development of this motif, see Chapter 3 of Slavoj Žižek, of Enjoyment, London: Verso 1995. 33. See Balibar, La crainte des masses, pp. 42-3. The Metastases 34. For a more detailed account ofthis reflected cynical attitnde, see Chapter 3 of Žižek, The Indivisible Remainder. 35. See Mario Vargas Llosa, 'Hooligans, the product of a high civilisation', The Independent, 27 June 1998, The Weekend Review, p. 5. 36. This logic was brought to its absurd extreme in ex-Yugoslavia, in which the very notion of a workers' strike was incomprehensible, since, according to the ruling ideology, workers already rule in the self-management of the tir companies - against whom, then, could they possibly strikc? 37. The interesting point here is how, in this struggle within Socialism in decay, the very term 'political' functioned in an inverted way: it was the Communist Party (standing for the police logic) which 'politicized' the situation (speaking of 'counter-revolutionary tendencies', etc.), while the opposition movement insisted on their fundamentally 'apolitical', civic-ethical character: they just stood for 'simple values' of dignity, freedom, etc. - no wondertheir nain signifier was the 'apolitical' notion of solidarity. 38. To put it in yet another way: substance is a name for the inert resistance of the falsity; when, for example, rational subjective insight tells us that some notion is wrong, that it hinges on our misperception, on our 'blind, superstitious prejudices', and this notion nevertheless inexplicably persists, we are dealing with a substance. Far from designating the Truth, substance is the inert persistence of the false appearance. For this reason, Jungian archetypes point towards the dimension of the 'psychic substance': they designate the POLITICAL SUBJECTIVIZATION AND ITS VICISSITUDES 243 dimension of inert psychic formations that return again and again, although we theoretically undermined them long ago. 39. Abraham Lincoln's comment on spiritualism ('For those who like that sort of thing, I should think it is just about the sort of thing they would like') expresses this tautological character of nationalist self-enclosure perfectly, and, for this reason, works even better if one uses it to characterize nationalists, while it does not work if onene applies it to authentic radical democrats: one cannot say of authentic democratic engagement: 'For those who like that sort igageme of thing, it is just about the sort of thing they would like." as 40. See, especially, 'Les universels', in Balibar, La crainte des masses, pp. 421-54. 41. Here, the parallel with Laclau's opposition between the logic of difference - society sa differential symbolic structure - and the logic of antagonism - society as 'impossible', thwarted by an antagonistic split - is clear. Today, the tension between the logic of difference and the logic of antagonism takes the form of the tension between the liberal-democratic universe of negotiation and the 'fundamentalist' universe of the fight to the death between Good and Evil, Us and Them. 42. When, at the beginning of this century, Béla Bartók transcribed hundreds of Hungarian folk songs, he provoked the lasting

animosity of the partisans of Romantic national revival precisely by literally executing utin their programme p of reviving authentic ethnic roots. ... In Slovenia, the Catholic Church and nationalists paint an idyllic picture of the nineteenth-century countryside so no wonder that when, a couple of years ago, the ethnological notebooks of a Slovene writer from that time (Janez Trdina) were published, they were largely ignored: they provide a picture of daily life in the countryside full of child fornication and rape, alcoholism, brutal violence.... 43. One of the minor yet telltale events that bear witness to this 'withering-away' of the nation-state is the slow spread of the obscene institution of private prisons in the USA and other Western countries: the exercise of what should be the monopoly of the State (physical violence and cocrcion) becomes the object of a contract between the State and a private company which exerts coercion on individuals for the sake of profit - what we have here is simply the end of the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence which (according to Max Weber) defines the modern State. 44. See Scott Lash and John Unrry, Economies of Signs and Space, London: Sage 1994. 45. See Darian Leader, Why Do Women Write More Letters Than They Post?, London: Faber & Faber 1996, pp. 67-8. The reversal at work in this anecdote quoted by Leader is beautifully illustrated in a recent Geriman publicity spot for Magnum, a brand of gigantic ice-cream-ona-stick. First we see a poor working-class couple passionately embracing; when they agree to make love, the girl sends the boy to the seaside shop nearby to buy a condom, so that they will be able to make love safely. The boy goes into the corridor with the condom vending machine and notices another vending machine close to it selling Magnum; he looks in his pocket and notices that he has only one 5-mark coin, enough for either a condom or an ice cream, not for both. After some moments of desperate hesitation, we see him passionately licking the ice cream, with the inscription on the screen: 'Sometimes you have to get your priorities right!' Of special interest here is the rather obvious phallic connotation of the Magnum ice-cream-on-a-stick, the 'big' penis: when, in the last shot, the boy is licking the ice cream, his quick jerky gestures imitate an intense fellatio; so the message of getting your priorities right can also be read in a direct sexual way: better the quasi-homoerotic experience of oral sex than the straight heterosexual experience... 46. One can argue, of course, that the circular movement of Capital itself is already a symbolic phenomenon, not something externally opposed to culture (did not Lacan emphasize that the first chapter of Capital Iis a magisterial exercise in the logic of the signifier?); while, on the other hand, cultural phenomena themselves are no less sites of material production, caught in the web of socioeconomic power relations. While fully endorsing both these points, one should none the less insist that the socioeconomic logic of Capital provides the global framework which (over) determines the totality of cultural processes. 244 THE TICKLISH SUBJECT 47. Another example of infinite judgement in our techno-New-Age is: 'The spirit (transcendental illumination, awareness) is a capsule (the so-called "cognitive enhancer" pill)." 48. See Paul Piccone, 'Postmodern Populism', Telos 103 (Spring 1995). We should also note here by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's attempt to oppose to upper-middle-class

feminism interested in the problems of literary and cinema theory, lesbian rights, etc., the 'family feminism' which focuses on the actual concerns of ordinary working women, and articulates ofd concrete questions of how to survive within the family, with children and a career. See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life, New York: Doubleday 1996. 49. The most concise formulation of the rightist suspension of public (legal) provided by Eamon de Valera: 'The people has no right to do wrong.' norms was 50. This acceptance of violence, this 'political suspension of the Ethical', is the limit of that which even the most 'tolerant' liberal stance is unable to trespass - witness the uneasiness of 'radical' post-colonialist Afro-American studies apropos of Frantz Fanon's fundamental insight into the unavoidability of violence in the process of actual decolonization. 51. The universality we are speaking about is thus not a positive universality with a determinate content but an empty universality, a universality withouta positive notion that would specify its contours, a universality that exists only in the guise of the experience of the injustice done to the particular subject who politicizes his/her predicament. The Habermasian answer to it would be, of course, that the very fact that subjects experience predicament as 'unjust' points towards some implicit normative structure that must be operative in their protest; Rancière's point, however, is that this is precisely the philosophical lure to be avoided: every translation of this 'empty universality' into some determinate positive content already betrays its radical character. their 52. See Judith Butler, 'Merely Cultural', New Left Review 227 (January/February 1998), pp. 33-44. 53. Butler emphasizes that the difference which characterizesaparticular social movement is not the external difference from other movements, but its internal self-difference - following Laclau, I am tempted to claim that this difference is the site of the inscription of the Universal - that Universality is, in its actual existence, the violent, splitting self-difference, which prevents a particular moment from achieving its self-identity (say, the self-difference of the queer movement between its particular demands and its universal anti-capitalist thrust). Butler says that Universality is the site of violent erasure and exclusion, and emphasizes how,,for fo that reason, it should be resisted - differing with her, I am tempted to say that, for the same reason, it should be endorsed. 54. Therein lies the grain of truth of Richard Rorty's recent polemics against 'radical cultural studies elitists (see Richard Rorty, Achieving Our America, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1998): under the pretence of radically questioning the mythical spectre of Power, they perfectly fit the reproduction of the existing power relations, posing no threat to them whatsoever - or, to paraphrase Walter Benjamin's thesis, their declared attitude of radical opposition to the existing social relations coexists with their perfect functioning within these relations, rather like the proverbial hysteric who perfectly fits the network of exploitation against which he complains, and effectively endorses its reproduction. 55. Immanuel Kant, 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch', in Kant's Political Writings, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991, p. 129. 56. It was one of the merits of Carl Schmitt that he clearly identified this unconditional will to assume responsibility as the

kernel of political authority beyond - or, rather, beneath - the typical liberal legitimization of those who exert power by reference to the smooth servicing of goods. PART III From Subjection to Subjective Destitution